

Little Novels of Nowadays
by Philip Gibbs



145136	ACC. NO.
LITTLE NOVELS	BOD



DREXEL LIB
ST. JOSE

GIBBS 145136
LITTLE NOVELS OF NOWADAYS
PR -6013
G36 L5

Library
St. Joseph's College
City Avenue at 54th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

Julia M. Nelson BB 1 ✓

Feb 1, 1925

*Little Novels of
Nowadays*

PHILIP GIBBS

By SIR PHILIP GIBBS

HEIRS APPARENT

THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

THE STREET OF ADVENTURE

WOUNDED SOULS

PEOPLE OF DESTINY

THE SOUL OF THE WAR

THE BATTLES OF THE SOMME

THE STRUGGLE IN FLANDERS

THE WAY TO VICTORY, 2 *Vols.*

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

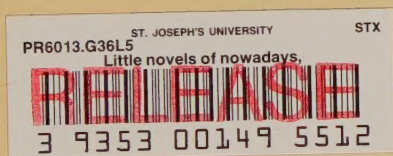
MORE THAT MUST BE TOLD

164313

Little Novels of Nowadays

BY

Philip Gibbs



PR
6013
• I26
L5



NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

145136

*Copyright, 1924,
By George H. Doran Company*

LITTLE NOVELS OF NOWADAYS

— B —

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

THE stories in this book are connected by a thread of plot which I have followed from London to Moscow and beyond through other cities. It is the thread of fate woven by the three ugly sisters in the wake of war, and fastened round the necks of men and women so that they can hardly escape from the wreckage of hopes in the life of Europe. In most of these tales my characters are victims of war and casualties of peace trying to find a way out of misery or to avert the perils ahead, by violence or charity. They are tales of yesterday, or at least of yesterdays not older than a year or two. My idea in writing them was to put in the form of little novels—rather different from “short stories”—not only plots suggested to me by incidents with which I came in touch or characters whom I saw in passing—those casual hints which build up in one’s mind until they make a tale with a touch of drama—but the thoughts and moods and hopes of Europe as I have seen it lately, the spirit of conversations I have had with people who revealed themselves, and the clash of passionate convictions, old traditions with new hopes, old hatreds with new faith, which I have seen on my travels since the war, and here at home. I have tried also in these stories to get something of the spirit of place into them, and not merely the outward look of cities and scenery.

They have a touch of truth. That is to say they are true in type to the things that happened yesterday. One story of mine, *The Stranger in the Village*, is a picture of what I saw in a famine-stricken village on the Volga, although “the stranger” himself was only suggested by a common belief and did not come when I was there. But the people were waiting for death in their snow-bound houses, and did not have long to wait. In the story I have called *Miss*

Smith of Smyrna, I have made use of the situation I found in that city of Asia Minor when I went there from Constantinople, and had a cold foreboding of the horror that came upon it. The characters of the Greek lieutenant and his wife are as I saw them in their house near the Turkish quarter, where the lady and her children sang to me one evening. "Miss Smith" is fictitious, suggested merely by an old Victorian lady whom I met in the house I have described. I am bound to mention that, because her story was believed to be true by many readers of an American magazine, who sent me anxious letters about the old lady's fate. In America also this story aroused considerable controversy at a time when a committee was investigating the question of admitting to the United States immense numbers of Greek refugees, starving and homeless after the burning of Smyrna. Americans who were against this proposal used my story as anti-Greek propaganda because of one incident I described, true in history, while others accused me of being anti-Turk. All my sympathy, I must confess, was with the unfortunate Greeks, whose sufferings have been beyond description, and who still need the charity of the world, after that horror on the quayside of Smyrna. In my story, *The Beggar of Berlin*, I built a tale about a man whom I saw several times in *Unter den Linden*, and who looked like John the Baptist. He was once a rich banker, ruined after the war, but that is all I know of his life. The pictures I give of Berlin in the Russian cabaret and the great hotel will be recognised by any one who knows Berlin during the last year or two. So also in my story, *A Mission in the Ruhr*, I have merely put a little drama into the grim reality of that French occupation of Germany's industrial stronghold as I saw it in Essen and other towns before the breakdown of passive resistance by the workers. It gives the French point of view at that time, as well as the German, fairly, I think. Without going into the details of other stories and telling just how much fact has gone to the fiction, I have already given away my underlying purpose and my method. Some literary critics will perhaps accuse me of using journalistic tricks as a substitute for literary ideals.

As a novelist, I am already used to that jeer of "journalist." But I venture to think that all fiction of greater interest than the usual love story must, and in most cases is, suggested by direct contact with history past or present and with living realities. The journalist should have the best chance in fiction because of his wide range of experience, and, indeed, looking at contemporary fiction and making no more than a passing reminder of Charles Dickens, who owed much of his knowledge of life to his reporting days, it will be noticed that many of the leading novelists of England and America have graduated in the school of journalism. Arnold Bennett was one, Kipling another, H. G. Wells is still a journalist, "which perhaps accounts for it," as the cynic will say. The greatest stylist in England, one of the best short story writers, is C. E. Montague, of *The Manchester Guardian*. Sinclair Lewis, of *Main Street*, was a journalist for many years. I could mention a hundred other names of less distinction, though good craftsmen with a sense of art. It must be admitted therefore that journalistic experience and some adaptation of journalistic method to literature does not rule a man out from the realm of fiction. On the contrary, I am convinced that this experience and method are more than ever likely to produce good literature, and perhaps great literature. The weakness of so much modern fiction, especially that of women in the lower ranks, is due to its limited range of interest and knowledge. If they draw direct from life, it is so often only a little life of amorous emotion or neurotic psychology. That has its interest and its value, sometimes very great, if greatly written, but it is not the whole of life. And if weakly done, without art, as in so many novels, it is unprofitable and very tiring. The novelist of to-day, if he looks beyond his own doors, has no lack of vital material if he is in search of romance, sensation, melodrama, or the realities of human nature. This Europe of ours is full of great history and great action. It is soaked in the tragedy of nations, in the passion of peoples, in the despair of individual men and women. It is seething with hatred, with hope, with flaming ideals. Youth is groping for a new philosophy of life, or reasserting old

creeds. Civilisation itself is threatened, or, at least, in the minds of many men and women there is that sense of impending downfall which was in the Greek and Roman mind in the last phases of their power. There are hunger and pestilence and revolt in countries not enormously remote. In every capital of Europe there are refugees who were once the spoilt children of fortune and are now in horrible poverty, princes and paupers, both. The old world of leisure and luxury and traditions is passing and nearly gone. A new world is coming, with desperate problems and many dangers. The adventure of life is not dull, anyhow! Is all that to be passed by in contemporary fiction, which is nothing if it does not interpret contemporary life? Are modern novelists and story writers to go on recording the little love tales of highly strung ladies and introspective men, and leave all that other world on one side because it frightens them, or they find it too big for their imagination, or too much in the newspapers? If so, then I, for one, would rather read *The Daily Herald*. I am asking for trouble in writing this preface. The journalist will be the first to shout "Journalism!" But I think the public will agree with me, because it is significant that they are reading those books most which reveal even in a small measure the realities and moods and thoughts of this troubled world of to-day and yesterday. For my own stories I make no claim beyond the attempt to do that, with a sense of truth limited by my own small vision.

P. G.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I: THE STRANGER IN THE VILLAGE	13
II: MISS SMITH OF SMYRNA	37
III: THE BEGGAR OF BERLIN	64
IV: A BARGAIN IN THE KREMLIN	90
V: THE VISIONS OF YVONNE	122
VI: THE CASTLE OF ARNSBERG	156
VII: THE HOUSE WITH THE SPARE BEDROOMS	183
VIII: THE WELLS OF TRUTH	204
IX: A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL	232
X: TURKISH DELIGHT	251
XI: THE GAME OF POVERTY	281
XII: A MISSION IN THE RUHR	317

Little Novels of Nowadays

Little Novels of Nowadays

I: THE STRANGER IN THE VILLAGE

THE people of Lubimovka—those few who survived the famine which ravaged the Volga region of Russia in 1920 and 1921—believe firmly to this day that Nicholas, Tsar of All the Russias, was not murdered by Bolsheviki, according to newspaper stories which professed to give full and lurid details of that historic tragedy, but actually came to their village more than a year after he was supposed to be dead, lived among them with humility and love, and left behind him a relic worshipfully revered as proof of his identity.

It is an extraordinary story, and I confess when I heard it first from those Russian peasants and one young poet there, I regarded it merely as a variation of a myth which had been told me in Moscow, and once in a railway train on the way to Kazan, by highly educated Russians. They did not believe that the Tsar was dead. Some of them were convinced, without any evidence that seemed good to me, that he had escaped, or been allowed to escape, from his Bolshevik guards and had become a monk in some remote monastery in Asiatic Russia. Others believed that he was wandering about in peasant garb from one district to another, begging his way, and only revealing himself to trusted friends, most of them in misery or in hiding like himself.

It seemed to me the beginning of one of those fantastic traditions which spring up in popular imagination when some great personality disappears suddenly from the drama of life in which he played important parts. In the Middle Ages English kings murdered by their enemies, like Richard II or

Edward II, were supposed to be alive long after their poor bodies had been buried secretly, and now and again a pretender took advantage of this popular belief. Even in England during the Great War there were thousands of people who refused to believe that Kitchener had been really drowned on the *Hampshire*, and asserted that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Germans. It is no wonder, therefore, that in Russia, with its credulous and simple peasants, there should be a widespread belief that the Tsar, their Little Father as they called him before the revolution, should be still alive.

What is remarkable about the tale of this stranger who came to Lubimovka is the unshakable faith of a young man like the poet Sacha—a sceptic and intellectual—and the apparent self-delusion of the man himself. From everything Sacha tells me it seems probable that this Nicholas Alexandrovitch, as he called himself, confessed that he was the Tsar, or at least did not deny that title, although he had nothing to gain except hunger and death, apart from a mystical power over a few starving peasants. He may have been mad, though his conversation was full of wisdom and sweetness. Certainly he could not have been a common charlatan, for that kind of man does not behave as this man did with simple charity. On the other hand, he may have been—well, I will tell you the story just as it happened and as it was told to me by Sacha the poet, by Sonia the schoolmistress, and by Michael and his wife Anna.

It was in the autumn of 1920, when the first snow had fallen, but before the Volga had frozen up. In the village of Lubimovka, as in all other villages along the Volga valley, there were hunger and disease and death and fear. Worse than death was that great fear of the agony ahead and of inescapable doom, as it seemed. Strong peasant men, unafraid of death for themselves—many of them had fought against the Germans in the Great War with a simple and stubborn heroism in the midst of slaughter—trembled and felt their hearts turn to water when they saw their women weak with hunger and their children withering, and could

see no hope at all of getting fresh supplies of food when their scanty stores had gone. They could not fight against this death which crept into Lubimovka like a grey wolf, hungry for the little ones and the old people.

It was in the afternoon of a day in middle October that the stranger came to the village. No one saw him enter through the gate in the stockade which surrounded the village according to the old custom of putting up a high fence to keep in the cattle and keep out the wolves. Now in Lubimovka no barrier could keep the wolf from the door—the invisible hunger-wolf—and most of the cattle had already been killed because there was no fodder left to keep the cows alive. The stranger entered by the gate which opens on the road towards Tetiushi. His footsteps made black smudges in the snow that had newly fallen. A peasant girl, staring through the window of a little wooden house facing the village pump—she was praying that death might come quickly to her mother, who lay stricken with typhus on the bed above the stove—saw the man's tall figure walking up the street towards the school-house. He was a bearded man with deep-set eyes which looked very sad, as this girl told Sacha. He wore a sheepskin coat and military boots, broken at the toes, and he walked like a soldier, with a straight back, but very slowly, as though exhausted after a long march.

The girl was startled by the sight of him, because it was a long time since any stranger had come to Lubimovka, and instead of men coming to the village many had gone away after the summer when blackened crops stood in the burning sun which that year as well as last had utterly destroyed all hopes of harvest. They had gone away with their wives and children in boats down the Volga, hoping to reach districts where some food was left for winter months. Others had fought to get places on railway trains going towards Moscow, where there was always food according to the old proverb that "all things roll down to Moscow." But dreadful stories had come back of those refugee trains and those boatloads of people escaping from famine. It was months before the trains reached Moscow, and many died on the

way. On the boats typhus broke out, and people who fled from famine found death in fever. It was better, perhaps, to stay in Lubimovka, and wait for death quietly at home. But it was strange that an unknown man should come to the village, walking like this in the snow which fell in thick flakes on his sheepskin coat and his ragged fur cap. That peasant girl, Maria, who was the daughter of the blacksmith, Boris Markovitch, had a stupid idea, which she told Sacha, that it was Death himself coming to Lubimovka. She was afraid and yet glad when the man turned his head towards the window from which she was staring out, and looked at her with his sad, kind eyes. "It is Death calling to me," she thought, and crossed herself. But he passed on, and she still lived.

It was a hundred yards farther on that the black smudges of his footsteps in the snow came to an end, and it was the peasant Michael who was the next to see this stranger.

Michael had gone out into his yard to see his little cow, which was dying for lack of fodder. He had kept it alive by feeding it on cabbage stalks, which he had hidden in his cellar under a pile of sacks. His neighbours were angry with him because he kept it alive. They said: "Michael feeds his cow while our children die. He will burn in the next world because he cares more for his little cow than for our beautiful innocents who are withering like flowers. He has sold himself to the Devil."

Michael was afraid of that. Perhaps this love he had for his little cow was unholy and devilish. Perhaps God would punish him because he had given its milk to his own children and not a drop to his neighbours for their starving babes. But how could he share such a little milk with the whole village? He could at least keep his own family alive while the little cow was fed. Better that they should live than that all should die, and as for himself, he did not let a drop pass his lips, but munched only small morsels of bread made of leaves and straw and a few husks. Now there would be no more milk for his wife and the little ones. He had come to the end of his secret hoard of cabbage stalks. It was three days since the little cow had been fed. Its eyes were

glazing. He could not bear its pitiful gaze, so full of reproach that he had not the heart to kill it.

It was when he came out of its shed cursing himself because he had not the strength to kill it—it had licked his hand with a hot tongue—that he saw the stranger outside his house in the falling snow, and the long trail of black footsteps behind him. The stranger stood looking up the street, and his lips moved as though he were speaking, but suddenly he lurched sideways like a drunken man, and fell in a heap face downwards in the snow.

Michael stared at him stupidly. Then a kind of anger crept into his brain. What business had this man to die outside his house? Why not stay and die decently in his own home without troubling his neighbours? It was probably that foolish brute, Boris, the blacksmith, who had boasted so often of his great strength until typhus made him as weak as a maiden. The silly boaster! Michael was as strong as he was now, and still alive, though no blacksmith with arms like twisted wire.

Michael strode towards him sullenly, and then saw it was not his old enemy the blacksmith, but some stranger. He could see that by the shape and colour of the man's hands. They were not hands that belonged to men of Lubimovka. They were queer-looking hands for any man, not gnarled and blunt by honest work in fields and sheds, with axe and spade and pick, but like the hands of some fine lady, or like those of Sonia the schoolmistress.

Michael turned over the man's body as he lay crumpled up in the snow, and peered into his face. He seemed to have seen that bearded face before, those deep-set eyes, now closed, that straight nose. It was familiar to him in some vague way, like the memory of a face seen in a dream, or some picture. This man was dressed as a peasant. His sheepskin coat was torn. His soldier's boots were broken at the toes like the boots of all those men who had come back from the war. But this was no peasant's face. Even Michael, who was a stupid man, could see that. Lying there unconscious, grey as though the hand of death had touched it, it had a strange, noble look that was startling.

"He is like a saint," thought Michael. "He is even a little like the good Christ."

He had a sense of fear. There was something uncommon in the look of this senseless man who had come to a village from which other men fled, and where every one waited for death. How had he come? There were no more boats on the Volga because of the floating ice. There were no sledges from Tetiushi, or any other place, because the horses had all dropped dead on the roadsides. This man with hands like a woman and face like a saint had come in a miraculous way, suddenly, just as one heard in old Russian tales which old women told about the stove on winter nights.

Michael called out to his wife:

"Anna! Anna!"

The fear in his voice brought her quickly to the door.

"Have you killed the little cow?" she asked, and then saw her man leaning over the body in the snow.

She crossed herself, and then leaned back, faint, against the doorpost.

"May his soul know peace!" she said.

Michael was angry with her because he was afraid.

"Can't you see his soul is still inside his body?" he growled. "Help me carry the wretch indoors. Snow makes a bad bed."

"You're mad," said Anna, drawing a shawl closer about her face. "If it's typhus he'll die better in the snow. And if it's hunger, we have enough mouths to feed and no food."

"I'll kill the little cow," said Michael. "There will be meat to eat for a month or two. God will curse us if we leave this fool to die at our threshold. Take hold of his legs, or I'll beat you."

Anna came from her doorway and peered at the senseless man, and touched his forehead.

"It's not the typhus," she said. "He's as cold as the snow beneath him."

"Look at his hands," said Michael.

Anna looked at the hands lying limp on the snow, and then at the face above the sheepskin coat.

"He is like a saint in a picture-book," she said, and put both hands on her bosom.

The man and woman took hold of the senseless body. In the old days Michael and his wife could have lifted him as easily as a sack of potatoes, but hunger had weakened them. They dragged the stranger across their threshold, and then stood in their room, breathing heavily. Their little girl Katinka climbed down from the bed above the stove and stood with bare feet on the boards, clasping her mother's hand. The baby was whimpering in its sleep in a cradle near the stove.

It was the little girl who first made the astounding revelation which afterwards was believed by all the people of Lubimovka, except Vladimir, the Soviet agent, and Braunberg, the Jew, and Sara, his daughter.

"He is like the Little Father," she said, and looked up at a mark on the wall opposite the ikon. It was a mark made by a picture-frame which had hung there for years, as in all Russian cottages before the revolution, where a portrait of the Tsar, cut from some newspaper or magazine, or reproduced in colour by German printers, had always hung opposite the holy ikon. It was strange that this child should have remembered, for it was more than a year since the picture had been taken down by orders of the local Soviet, which had prohibited all portraits of the last of the Romanovs. With her bare feet she pattered to a cupboard on the other side of the stove, and dragged out a coloured print in a wooden frame, and held it up.

They were astounded and dismayed.

"The child is an idiot," said Michael sullenly. "Hunger has made her a little imbecile."

"It is a wonder we don't all go mad," said his wife.

They stood there, staring first at the portrait, and then at the man stretched out at their feet.

The portrait of the Tsar showed him in his uniform, with the star of St. Stanislaus at his breast. His beard was well-trimmed. He smiled out of his deep-set eyes. This man lying senseless on their bare boards had a ragged beard, and there was no smile on his face and no star at his breast.

And yet, now that Katinka had spoken her words, there could be no avoiding the amazing likeness of the stranger to that picture of the Emperor. Feature by feature it was the same face. The wide nostrils were the same, the low, broad forehead, the deep-set eye sockets.

The two peasants, husband and wife, stood silent, with their hands clasped and their mouths gaping.

It was the husband who spoke first.

"There are many Russians like the dead Tsar," he said, but his voice trembled uncertainly.

Anna, his wife, suddenly went down on her knees beside the stranger's senseless body, and thrust her hand beneath his sheepskin's coat, as though about to choke him. Her poor, claw-like hands, skinny with hunger, trembled feverishly. There was a thin silver chain round the man's neck. She tugged at it, and with a jerk pulled something out from below a ragged vest. It was a jewel in the shape of a star, which lay now above the shaggy sheepskin. In that cottage of Lubimovka there was no light except the dusk of an October afternoon, with the white snow outside, but where the jewel lay it seemed to these peasants as though a real star had fallen from the sky, and was twinkling in their poor, bare room.

Katinka clasped her thin little hands, and gave a cry of joy, as always she did when her father brought in a little milk from the cow.

"Truly," she said, "it is the Little Father!"

Michael went down on his knees beside his wife, and stared at the star so closely that his straw-coloured beard almost touched it. He raised a trembling hand, and tried to take hold of the jewel; but something withheld him, and he shrank back fearfully with a queer, strangled cry.

Anna swayed to and fro like a woman crooning to the dead.

"Christ Jesus!" she cried. "It is a miracle of God!"

At that moment the man who had been senseless opened his eyes, and stirred with a little groan.

As though trying to hide some dangerous and deadly

secret, Anna put her claw-like hands at his throat again, and thrust the star out of sight below his ragged vest.

The man flung an arm over his head, and cried out in a faint, agonising voice:

"Oh, Death!"

Michael and his wife stayed there stiffly on their knees, staring at him in a dazed, frightened way. It was little Katinka who seemed to have most sense. She brought a jug of water from a shelf, and, wetting her little thin hand, moistened the man's forehead, and put some drops on his lips and beard. Presently he turned his head slightly, and smiled at her.

"Am I dead at last?" he asked very faintly. "Are you one of my little daughters?"

"You are my Little Father," said Katinka.

"Why, yes," said the man, "I am the Little Father of all my dear people."

He spoke only in a whisper, but his words were heard clearly by Michael and his wife, kneeling on either side of him.

"*Gospodin!*" said Michael, meaning Sir or Lord, "who are you, in God's name?"

The stranger heard the words and looked puzzled. For quite a long time he did not answer. Then he struggled up a little so that he leaned on one elbow, and stared round the dim room and into the faces of the peasant and his wife. Presently he spoke in a stronger voice, though still very gently.

"I am Nicholas Alexandrovitch, a wandering beggar. I think I am dying, so that I shall not trouble you long. What is the name of this village?"

It was Katinka who answered. The child's father and mother seemed speechless and stricken by fear.

"It is Lubimovka. We are all dying. Soon there will be no food for any one. Then we shall die quickly."

"My poor people!" said the man, with a pitiful groan. "My poor Russia! My poor little ones!"

Tears came into his eyes and rolled slowly down his haggard cheeks until they touched his beard.

"If we are very careful," said Katinka, "we have enough bread to keep us alive for three or four weeks. And father is going to kill the little cow so that we shall have meat until the winter. After that, of course, we shall have to die."

She spoke simply, with the gravity of a child to a grown-up friend who understands. Then she went to the cupboard again and brought out the piece of bread which had been put aside for her evening meal. It was the bread made of straw and leaves and husks which I saw in that village in the year of famine.

"Eat, Little Father," she said to the stranger.

He shook his head and smiled.

"I have come here to die, not to eat your bread, my little one."

"If you do not eat it I shall cry," said Katinka.

He shook his head again, and said: "No, no, I am not hungry."

But when Katinka burst into tears he took a small portion of her bread and ate it, and said: "If men were as kind as little children, this world would be like heaven."

"*Gospodin*," said Michael, moistening his lips and speaking hoarsely, "all that we have, which is little, we shall be glad to share with you."

"I thank you, *tavarish*," answered the man, using that word which means "comrade," and replaces all other titles in Russia, by order of the Bolsheviks.

That was the beginning of this legend or myth about the coming of the Tsar to Lubimovka. It was that evening after dark, when the man who called himself Nicholas Alexandrovitch was sleeping on the floor beside the stove, stirring sometimes in his dreams, that Michael took his lantern and walked through the falling snow to the house where young Sacha the poet lived with his mother and his crippled sister Lydia. Before the revolution, this family had been rich, with a house in Moscow; but Sacha's father, who was an officer of the old army, had been killed in the war, and

the house in Moscow and all their wealth had been taken by the Bolsheviks, and now Sacha and his mother and his crippled sister were as poor as all the others in Lubimovka. But Sacha was a great reader of books, and wrote poetry; and, although no more than nineteen years of age, played a man's part in the village, and was the only one who was not afraid of Vladimir, the Soviet agent, or of Braunberg the Jew. He was the secretary of the village council, and had been put in prison for a time for resisting the requisition of grain and potatoes by the Red Army after the failure of the harvest. There was not a peasant in Lubimovka who did not regard this young man with hero-worship, because he had defied the Red soldiers for their sake. It was partly for that reason that Michael went round to his house to tell him of the stranger who had come. But it was also because Sacha had once lived in Moscow. Assuredly he must have seen the Tsar, the Little Father, as he was called then. He would be able to say whether this man who wore a flaming star under his vest was, or was not, the Emperor of all the Russias. Michael had hardly a doubt about it. But Sacha would know.

The young man was reading aloud by the dim light of a wax candle when Michael stood inside the door, with his fur cap in his hand and a thin mantle of snow on his leather tunic. Lydia, the crippled sister, lay on a couch by the stove, and Michael could see her shining eyes in a white face, though the candlelight hardly reached her. Sacha's mother sat on the other side of the room with bowed head and her hands in her lap—a black figure.

Sacha was reading something from a big book. It was something about passing from death to life, where there would be no hunger, but eternal joy and beauty. Then he raised his head as Michael opened the door, and the cold wind made his candle gutter.

"I wish to speak with you, Sacha," said Michael.

Sacha pushed back a lock of hair that had fallen over his forehead, and shielded the candle with his hands.

"What is it, Michael? Is it bad news you bring through the snow?"

"It is strange news," said Michael. "It is hard to believe one's own eyes."

"What have you seen?" asked Sacha.

Michael was slow in answering. He was a shy man, and perhaps these people would laugh at him if he told them something which was hard to believe. Perhaps also it would not be safe to tell any one but Sacha. Women could not keep a secret. And this was a secret which might lead to trouble. They might all be shot by the Soviet Government if it leaked out.

"Pardon me," said Michael, "but I wish to tell you alone, Sacha. If you will step outside the door——"

"No, no," said Sacha, "it is better in this warm room. You need not be afraid of my mother and sister."

"I am afraid of what I have to tell you," said Michael.

It was some time before he could bring himself to tell these people. Sacha thought his cow had died. And little Lydia, the crippled girl, prayed that typhus had not stricken his household. There was no sound in the room except a kind of gasp when at last he told his tale.

"A stranger has come to the village. He fell with weakness at my door. It was my little girl who saw his likeness, and my wife who found a jewelled star beneath his vest. He is no common man. I verily believe, as God hears me, that it is the man whom we used to call our Little Father, the Tsar of Russia, whom all men believe to be dead."

The people in the room did not laugh at him. He was glad of that. But they stared at him silently. He could see their eyes upon him beyond the radiance of the candlelight.

It was Sacha who spoke first.

"Have you gone mad, Michael Michaelovitch?"

Michael answered with humility.

"It is possible that I have gone a little mad, Sacha. In this time of hunger and death it is hard to keep one's wits. But I believe that the Tsar Nicholas is now sleeping on the floor below my stove, and that my wife Anna is on her knees beside him, and that my little daughter Katinka was led by God to see his likeness."

They would not believe him. And yet they did not laugh

at him. It seemed to Michael that they were a little frightened, as people who listen to a tale of ghosts, not believing, but afraid when the wind howls outside, and when the door blows open. Sacha's face had gone very white, and his crippled sister sat up on her couch with burning eyes.

"Do not tell this tale to others in the village," said Sacha. "Vladimir will report it to Moscow. You will be shot if they hear it there, Michael."

It was on the next morning that Sacha went round to Michael's house. The stranger was sitting by the stove with Katinka on his lap. He was telling her a story of old Russian history, and she had her arm about his neck, and her thin little face against his bearded cheek. Michael stood watching them from the doorway of the inner room, and Anna, his wife, was scrubbing the floor, and muttering prayers as she worked.

Sacha stood on the threshold and called out to Michael, while his eyes rested on the stranger's face.

"Have you killed the little cow, Michael?"

"I shall kill it directly," said Michael.

The stranger looked at Sacha and smiled, and said: "Good morning, comrade. You see, I have found a friend in Lubimovka."

"From what part do you come?" asked Sacha.

"I have been wandering," answered the man. "In spite of the famine people have given me a share of their bread. After all, the charity of man is greater than cruelty. That is the hope of the world—our only hope."

"Here," said Sacha, "we wait for certain death. There is no hope this side of the grave."

"I shall be glad to die here," answered the stranger; "perhaps I have reached the end of my journey!"

"I am young," said Sacha; "I do not wish to die."

He spoke harshly, and all the time his eyes were fixed on the stranger's face.

"It is hard for youth," said the stranger, very gently. "The old men of the world have betrayed them. It was the wickedness of the old men that made the war, and led to the agony and evil that followed in the wake of war. The

sins of the fathers are visited on the children. How sad and pitiful is that! I am one of the old men whose ignorance and folly must be paid for by the sacrifice of youth. And yet Katinka here forgives me. Perhaps God will forgive, knowing my weakness and how I was betrayed."

Sacha stood there with a grave face, and one lock of hair falling over his forehead. Suddenly, as though something had broken in his spirit, he turned his head away and wept, and then stumbled forward and went down on one knee before the stranger, and took his hand, and said: "My Lord, my Lord!"

The man who called himself Nicholas Alexandrovitch was startled, and perhaps frightened, by this homage of the boy. He put little Katinka off his lap and stood up, leaning against the tall stove because of his weakness, and touched Sacha's head with his right hand.

"Do not call me that!" he said. "I am your comrade. I am a poor beggar living on the charity of starving folk. I am the lowest of the low in this Empire of misery and hunger and death. I am less lucky than those who have died more quickly. I am the scapegoat laden with the sins of Russia."

It must be remembered that this boy, Sacha, was weakened by hunger, like all men in the villages of the Volga valley, and who, before then, had lived through the terror of the revolution, and had seen Russia brought to ruin and anarchy, and all its old civilisation overthrown. I think that is one explanation why not only Sacha, but other people in Lubimovka, found it easy to believe that the bearded stranger who had come among them was the man who had been their Tsar. They were in an emotional, overwrought state. The womenfolk, and even many of the men, had been praying for some miracle to happen by God's grace to save them from starvation. There were some who believed that war, famine and pestilence which had come upon the world was a presage of the second coming of Christ. Mingled with the Christian faith and most wonderful resignation of these peasants, all sorts of fanaticisms, credulities, supersti-

tions, cropped up in those villages in the famine belt and beyond. The presence, therefore, of a man bearing a remarkable likeness—no doubt—to the Tsar Nicholas, and speaking in terms of mysticism and allegory, and certainly of the old noble rank, whoever he was, did not need more than a suggestion—which the child Katinka had supplied—to convince these people that he was truly the former ruler of Russia, who had come among them in the guise of a beggar. That is my theory, though I confess Sacha ridicules it and swears that he recognised beyond all doubt the Tsar himself, whom he had seen as a child in the palace of the Kremlin.

"How beyond all doubt?" I asked him, and he said: "Because below his left ear there was a little mole which I had remarked when my father took me to the palace and held me up for the Tsar to bless."

After that first meeting Sacha went round often to Michael's house, in order to gaze at the stranger with reverent eyes and listen to his tales to Katinka—he knew all the legends of Russian history—and his simple talk to the child's parents. He had a habit of sighing deeply in the midst of his tales about the old saints and heroes, and sometimes fell into a kind of trancelike silence, when the tears dropped slowly from his eyes and fell in his beard. At those times no one dared to interrupt his thoughts, and presently he would seem to wake with a start and smile at Katinka, and say: "Where was I in that tale?"

Always at meal times he would eat only the tiniest morsel of that poor bread which they made out of apple leaves and straw, and even when the little cow was killed at last, he would eat none of its meat, but only dipped his bread in the gravy. It was wonderful that he could keep alive on such little food, and although the weakness of his body was visible, he still had strength enough to walk a little, unlike other men in the village—the blacksmith among them—who lay on their beds above the stoves hardly able to lift a hand because of their long hunger.

Sacha's visits to Michael's house became a mystery to Sonia the schoolmistress, and it was her dear jealousy which

caused this boy to break the secrecy which he had imposed upon his own lips as well as upon his mother and sister. How could he keep this secret from her when they had none other in the world?

It was six months before the famine that they had discovered their love, and found it gave them not only joy, so that all the misery of Russia under Bolshevik rule did not touch them any more, but also courage to face all else that might happen, and even death itself. All Sacha's poetry was written for Sonia. All the knowledge she had from the books she read after her drudgery in the little schoolhouse, was poured into the letters she wrote him every day, though they were never posted, but slipped into his pocket between their embraces. Together they discussed all the problems of life and death and eternity, and because of the time in which they lived, the philosophy of this boy and girl was touched with the grim knowledge of man's cruelty, and the failure of all men's dreams of liberty and progress. Yet with the faith and hope of youth they believed in the future of Russia after this time of agony, in its regeneration and greatness.

"We shan't live to see it, my dear," said Sacha many times, but was comforted when Sonia touched his hand and said: "Not in the body, but in the spirit, my comrade."

When the famine began, Sacha tightened his belt and hoarded up some of his own rations so that Sonia might not starve. But then he found that she was already starving herself by saving her rations for him. Only by entreaties and quarrels could they agree to eat enough to keep themselves alive so long as any food remained. This love story in the heart of the famine seemed to me one of the most touching and pitiful tales I have heard, and it was Sacha himself who told me, with that lack of self-consciousness and that simplicity which are the source of charm in Russian character.

It was after the fourth night that Sonia came round to Sacha's house. They met in the street, there, with a slight snow falling on them so that their fur caps were whitened.

He saw by her face that the girl had been weeping, and

his heart felt a stab of guiltiness. Yet she smiled at him and spoke lightly.

"You look older since I last saw you, Sacha. Is it four nights or four years since we met?"

He stared down at his feet in the snow, afraid to meet her candid eyes. Yet after that moment of thought he knew that he must tell her the secret that had kept him away from her, or be unloyal to their love.

"Sonia," he said, "it is dangerous to know what I am going to tell you. It is the most perilous secret in Russia to-day, though its secrets are full of terror for those who keep them."

"Do not tell me that you have lost your love for me," she answered. "I could bear any secret but that."

He put his arm round her shoulder.

"Not that. That is impossible. But what I have to tell you is hardly less incredible. So unbelievable that even now I dare not tell you lest you should think me mad."

"What you tell me, I believe," she said, simply and gravely.

He told her then.

"A stranger has come to this village. He is a man whom all of us believed to be dead. A man betrayed by all his friends, and hated by all the world. He would be killed like a rat if they found him now, though he is innocent of all evil, I am certain."

"Is it Christ that has risen again?" asked Sonia, with a strange look at Sacha.

He was profoundly startled by those words. He, too, had wondered if Christ would come to Lubimovka before the ending of the world.

"Not that," he said. "But the stranger who has come was the ruler of all our people, and loved them, though he was powerless to help them. In Michael's house, lying on the boards, half dead with hunger, is he who was the Tsar. I have seen him and talked with him. I have no doubt."

"And you are not mad?" asked Sonia.

"No, I am not mad."

"Then I believe," she said.

Sacha led her into his house, and took off her shawl after the door was closed, and spoke to his mother and sister.

"I have told Sonia, and she believes."

"Then there is one more to be hanged when the Soviet knows," said Lydia, his crippled sister, and her voice had a sharp fear in it.

While they were talking in the darkness, without even one candle, because there was no more fat or oil, there was a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" called Sacha sharply, and from outside a quiet voice answered:

"Nicholas Alexandrovitch, the beggar."

Sacha opened the door, and across the threshold came the bearded man who wore a hidden star under his ragged vest. He carried Michael's lantern, and swayed a little as he stood on the threshold.

"My dear friends," he said, "I come for the sake of my little comrade, Katinka. She is stricken with typhus, and her mother asks for Sonia the schoolmistress, who saved the child of Boris the blacksmith."

Sonia moved across the room until she was touched with the rays of the lantern shining across the threshold.

"I am Sonia," she said. "I will go to the child."

"It is brave of you," said the man with the lantern. "The women of Russia have the spirit of Christ in their hearts. God will forgive the sins of their men after this time of punishment."

Sacha's mother, who had once been a lady of the Imperial Court in Moscow, though now she was like a gipsy, with dirty hands because she did rough work and there was no soap in Lubimovka, rose from her chair and faltered across the room, with her dark eyes staring at the man with the lantern. Then she uttered a shrill cry and fell to her knees before the stranger, and clasped his hands and wept over them.

"Do not kneel before me," he said. "I am Nicholas the beggar. An outcast and a sinner."

He beckoned to Sonia, and said: "Come, for my little comrade, Katinka, is very ill."

He held the lantern while she put on her shawl again, and led her out into the snow.

Sacha bent over his mother, and raised her from the floor.

"It is true, then?" he asked, and she said: "It is his face and voice."

It was through Anna, the wife of Michael, that the story was spread in Lubimovka. In her distraction because of Katinka's fever she talked wildly to her neighbours, and from cottage to cottage there passed the whisper that the stranger in the village was the man whom the world believed to be dead. Little groups of peasants gathered outside Michael's house, where Katinka lay tossing in her little bed by the stove, and they peered through the windows for a glimpse of the stranger who sat by the side of the child whom he called his little comrade. They whispered together, and one old woman said: "Perhaps he has come to rescue us from famine. God will listen to his prayers."

Another said: "He has but to touch the child, and she will be well."

Others said: "It is certainly the Little Father. But he will be taken and killed if we do not keep his secret."

It was a bad way of keeping a secret, this gathering outside Michael's house. Vladimir, the Soviet agent, saw them there and questioned them. One toothless old woman who hated him spat on the ground and said: "All you Bolshevik devils will soon be hanged as you deserve. Our Tsar is back again."

"What does the old fool say?" asked Vladimir, with a black look. He was not haggard and thin like the other men in Lubimovka. As the Soviet agent he had first share of food sent down from Moscow at the beginning of the famine. It was believed that he had hoarded many sacks of potatoes which belonged to the commune. He was feared as well as hated, because he was in the pay of the Cheka—the secret police—and could send people to their death if he had a grudge against them.

Now they tried to cover up the words of the old woman, Kakoshka.

"She has lost her wits with her last tooth!"

"She is the mother of imbeciles!"

But another woman in the crowd shouted at Vladimir.

"It is true what she says. Our Little Father has come to Lubimovka. Lenin had better look out for himself, and all his murderers."

Vladimir scowled round on the peasants.

"You people have all gone daft. If you weren't all starving to death, I would have you sent to the prisons in Moscow."

He strode away down the village, but he must have made it his business to find out more about the story, for that night he came to Michael's house with Braunberg the Jew, and the girl Sara. They were the only Communists in Lubimovka, where the peasants had no love for that philosophy.

Sonia was there, mixing some medicine for the child Katinka, whose thin little face was scarlet as she lay unconscious. Michael and his wife were sitting at their bare board weeping, with their heads on their arms, because their child was very near death. At the side of the stove the bearded stranger sat with his hands clasped on his knees and pity in his eyes as he watched Katinka.

Vladimir and his two companions came in noisily, without knocking at the door.

Michael raised his head and said: "What do you want, *tavarish?*"

"I want to see the stranger in your house," said Vladimir.

"I am here," said the man who called himself Nicholas Alexandrovitch.

Vladimir stared at him and spoke roughly:

"What's your name? Who are you?"

"I am Nicholas, a wandering beggar."

"Where do you come from?"

The bearded man smiled, and raised his hand towards the west.

"I have been through many villages of Russia, always wandering in search of death. But I have not found it yet."

Vladimir laughed harshly.

"It's easy to find in Russia, to most men. Death! This village stinks with it."

"And this house," said Sara, the daughter of the Jew. "I do not like the smell of typhus. Let's get out of here, Vladimir. There is no harm in this man."

Vladimir stared at the stranger again.

"You had better get on with your wandering, old father," he said. "The sooner you're out of Lubimovka the better for you, or you'll find death sooner than you expect. There are crazy folk here who take you for the dead Tsar. It is not good to be taken for a ghost. It leads to trouble."

"That is true," said the man. "I will go away. I do not wish to lead the people into trouble. They have had enough."

Vladimir spoke less harshly.

"Well, I will give you a day or two. It's not your fault, old man, that the people here are daft with hunger and misery. Not their fault either, poor wretches."

Suddenly Sonia drew back from Katinka's bedside and gave a little cry. But a louder cry came from Anna, the mother of the child. She sprang up from her chair by the table and raised both hands above her head, and then fell with a piercing cry by the side of Katinka's little bed.

Nicholas the beggar rose also from his chair and crossed himself. Then he put his hand on the shoulder of Michael and said: "It is well with the child. She is dead. God is merciful."

"Let us get out of here," said Sara the Jewess.

Vladimir and Braunberg and the woman were quick to get away from this house into which death had come so suddenly.

That evening when Sacha came round to take Sonia back to her house, he found only Nicholas the beggar in the front room. Little Katinka had been carried into the inner room, and Michael and Anna were praying with Sonia the school-mistress.

The stranger was pacing up and down with his hands clasped behind his back. When he saw Sacha cross the

threshold he smiled, and put his fingers to his lips for silence.

"My little comrade has gone ahead of me," he said in a quiet voice. "So many of my comrades have gone before me! I feel lonely as I wander."

"My Lord," said Sacha, "when is there going to be an end of all this misery? When are you coming back again so that Russia may be saved?"

"It is not through me that Russia can be saved," said the man. "Russia must save herself, after much agony and punishment for sin. We are being punished. Our poor Russia is suffering for the sins of our fathers. But her soul lives in these peasant folk. It is by their faith and charity that Russia will be saved."

"One day you will come back," said Sacha, with a kind of sob.

The bearded man shook his head.

"My end is near at hand. The end of my journey is close upon me. I shall be glad to rest at last."

Sacha has not told me all that was spoken between them that night. There are some things that he keeps secret still, but it seems that the stranger spoke in a kind of vision of the future that would come to Russia, and of a splendid destiny. Then, later, he put his hand below his ragged vest and pulled out the jewelled star, and slipped the silver chain over his head and gave the star to Sacha.

"This is all the wealth I have left in the world," he said. "I kept it as a holy relic, for it belonged to my ancestors and to one dear saint. But it is better to buy some food with it for these poor people here. If you can get as far as Moscow, it is likely that you could sell it for some grain. There are people still who covet such glittering stones."

"Moscow is a world away," said Sacha. "I could not get there or come back again."

"Then my star is worthless," said Nicholas, and his head drooped a little.

But he would not take it back again, and that night when Sacha went back with Sonia, he carried the star in his breast pocket and it seemed to burn above his heart.

There was heavy snow next day, and Sacha bent his head to the storm when early in the morning he trudged round to Michael's house. All through the night he had lain awake, thinking of the star which lay under his pillow and of the man who had given it into his keeping. He had determined to make the journey to Moscow for the sake of the people of Lubimovka. If he could sell the star he might bring back food enough to save many lives. But before going he wanted to see its owner again, so that he might take a message from him to people in Moscow who believed him to be dead. The boy was on fire with faith and hope, so that he did not feel the coldness of the snow as it fell in flakes upon his face. He had an absolute faith that this man in Michael's house was he who had been Tsar of All the Russians, and Sacha was persuaded that it was a miracle which might lead Russia out of the depths and save her people.

On the threshold of Michael's house he saw the little coffin of Katinka being carried out on her father's shoulders. Behind, with her shawl over her face and shoulders, walked the poor wife Anna, and some peasant women who were weeping with her. Last of all came Sonia, weeping.

Sacha went up to the girl whom he loved before any in the world, and touched her on the arm.

"Where is the stranger?" he asked.

"He has gone," said Sonia. "He went away just now, after kissing Katinka before her coffin was closed. See, there are his footsteps in the snow."

Sacha gave a queer cry.

"I must follow him! I must speak with him again."

"The snow will hide his footsteps," said Sonia. "You will never follow his track."

But Sacha left her and hurried over the snow, where, very clearly at first, were the footmarks in the snow of a man with a long stride. They led up the village street to the gate in the stockade on the northern side, and then beyond to the flat, open country, until they disappeared beneath the snow which was falling thickly now. Sacha stumbled forward through the snow, which a light wind blew upon his

breast and cap. He could hardly see a yard ahead, and he called out many times: "My Lord! My Lord!" But no voice answered him. The stranger had disappeared into that white world of swirling flakes. Presently Sacha stood still, and then retraced his steps with his head bent.

Nicholas Alexandrovitch had gone on his journey again in search of death, and in Lubimovka he was not seen again.

Sacha kept the star, which was the only proof of a visit which otherwise might have seemed a dream. There was no need to go to Moscow to barter it for bread and potatoes, because the world had heard at last the cry of a starving people, and help came from England and the United States after many had died in Lubimovka and all the villages of the Volga valley. It was at that time, and with some American Relief officers, that I met Sacha and Sonia and heard their strange tale of the man with the star. It was Sonia the schoolmistress who was put in charge of the first soup kitchen, and it was good to see her joy when the children were fed.

"If only little Katinka could be here!" she murmured, and then said some words which I could not understand.

"It was the Little Father who brought us this good luck. God heard his prayers for the Russian people."

"Whom do you call the Little Father?" I asked, and it was then, from this girl and from Sacha, who spoke good English, that I heard the story I have now written. It seemed to me then as it seems to me now—utterly fantastic. Not for a moment do I believe that it was the Tsar of All the Russias who came to Lubimovka as a wandering beggar. Doubtless it was some Russian gentleman of the old *régime*, perhaps with some distant touch of kinship with the Tsar which would account for his likeness.

But neither Sacha nor Sonia, nor any of the people of Lubimovka, will listen to any theory of that kind. It was the Tsar himself, they say, and perhaps a hundred years hence this legend will still be believed in the Volga valley, where already the jewelled star is kept as a relic and a proof of what is unbelievable.

II: MISS SMITH OF SMYRNA

WHEN I read in the newspapers that the Turks had entered Smyrna and had celebrated their victory by burning the Christian quarters and massacring men, women and children, according to the way of Islam, I thought of certain people whom I had met there a year before, and wondered what agony they had suffered before their death, or what chance of escape had been theirs.

There was Lieutenant Mazarakis, of the headquarters staff of the Greek army, who had been extremely hospitable to me and taken me to dinner several times at his villa, a mile or more outside the city beyond the Turkish quarter. He had introduced me to his wife, a beautiful woman—rather too plump perhaps—approaching middle age, with two boys and two girls, ranging from fourteen years to five or six, adorably pretty, with their pale faces and black eyes, and charming in their behaviour. The eldest girl, I remember, sang little songs with her mother, in Greek and French; and Lieutenant Mazarakis, nervously polite to me, desperately anxious to make a good impression on an Englishman who, as a writing man, might help the claims of Greece by friendly propaganda, was delighted by my sincere enjoyment of his family entertainment.

It was when he was out of the room for a moment, fetching another bottle of sweet Greek wine, that his wife spoke to me in English, which the children did not understand. Turning round on her music stool she asked me a question with an anxiety that revealed a great fear in her soul.

“Do you think my children are safe here?” After a moment’s pause she seemed to explain her fear. “My husband is so brave that he ignores all danger, but I am a coward for my little ones. Is Smyrna safe from the Turk?”

I was startled and a little confused. Even while she had

been singing a French ballad, with her eldest girl's hand on her shoulder, and two babies on the floor by her side, and a small boy like a Greek statuette sitting back in an armchair listening and watching with grave eyes—a beautiful group as I remember them now—I had been chilled by a subconscious sense of fear and some foreboding of horror.

The Greek army held a line across Asia Minor, thirty miles inland from Smyrna. The Greek commander in chief, whom I had seen that morning in his headquarters on the sea front—an enormously fat old gentleman in a tight uniform with golden epaulettes and a string of decorations—had expressed his confidence not only in the strength of his line but in the ability of his troops to sweep the Turks before them.

"I have merely to give the order," he said, touching a piece of paper with his fat forefinger, "and the Greek army will advance as though on parade." He reiterated that phrase with sonorous satisfaction. "As though on parade, sir! It is only international politics—the intrigues of France and Italy, who support the Turkish Nationalists against the just claims of Greece—which prevents the immediate triumph of our arms."

A band was playing selections from *Carmen* outside the windows while the commander in chief gave me this audience. Everything seemed very merry and bright along the sea front of Smyrna, where the hot sunlight was dazzling on the white marble fronts of the rich Armenian quarter. Young staff officers of the Greek army, in waisted uniforms, with highly polished boots, laughed and chatted in the ante-room. A Greek gunboat—the *Imbros*—painted white, lay off the quay side, between a British battleship and an American cruiser. Smyrna seemed very safe under Greek domination.

But behind the Turkish lines, thirty miles away, were resolute men, under a leader named Mustapha Kemal, who was a great diplomatist and a great soldier. He had, as I had seen in Moscow and Petrograd, agents accredited to Soviet Russia, obtaining money, arms and ammunition. His army was growing in power and discipline and fanatical

faith. Every Turk in Constantinople was his supporter and fellow conspirator against the orders of a Sultan who was but the puppet and mouthpiece, they believed, of the Allied Powers. Mustapha Kemal had vowed to take Smyrna and to raise the whole Mohammedan world until the Crescent flew above its harbour.

I had no faith in the character and strength of the Greek army, in spite of the cheery optimism of the fat old gentleman in the golden epaulettes. I was conscious, while he spoke, of a sinister shadow lying beyond that sunlight in the port of Smyrna, and of a menace not made less perilous by selections from *Carmen* played by a Greek band outside headquarters.

So when the comely wife of Lieutenant Mazarakis turned to me and asked her question with immense fear in her eyes, I found it difficult to answer. I am thankful now that I was truthful, and not insincere for her husband's sake.

"I would not keep women or children here if I were a Greek officer who could send them away."

At that moment her husband came back with his bottle of sweet resinous wine. I think he saw the look of anguish in his wife's eyes, though she tried to hide it by turning to her music again.

"My wife is a little timid," he said, smiling and putting his hand on her shoulder. "Perhaps she has been telling you that she feels rather nervous in Smyrna? I hope you reassured her. The alternative is Athens, and I cannot bear to be separated from wife and bairns while I am stationed here, perhaps for years."

"Athens is a charming place," I answered. "The most beautiful little city, I think, in all Europe. I should feel happy if my family were there—if I were you."

A slight shadow crossed his face—a look of vexation, which he hid rapidly by a gay laugh.

"I thought I had convinced you that we hold Smyrna as securely as the English have London. And though I love Athens, you must admit that Smyrna is not without beauty. Even this villa is pretty good for a billet in time of war."

He glanced round the drawing-room, elegantly furnished

by its former owner and improved by Lieutenant Mazarakis, who had brought from Athens some of his own household treasures—ancient statuettes of Hermes and Aphrodite, found by himself in Thrace; some French paintings, some exquisite rugs and hangings.

I did not argue with him. I could not tell him candidly that I had no faith at all in the power of the Greek army to hold Smyrna. His flamboyant patriotism, his passionate hope that the spirit of ancient Greece had reawakened in his race after more than a thousand years of sleep made all argument futile.

I merely smiled and raised my glass when he poured out some of his sweet wine, and drank to the eternal friendship between Greece and England. Then I said farewell, and going out into the garden looked back and raised my hat to this Greek family gathered in the doorway, through which a yellow light came into the darkness. Mazarakis was by the side of his wife, and she stood surrounded by her four children—the two little ones holding her skirt, the eldest girl with her arm round her mother's waist, the small boy leaning his sleepy head against her arm. I shall always remember them like that; but the remembrance is darkened by the thought of that night of horror when the Turks came down to Smyrna and bayoneted women and children and tossed their bodies into the flaming bonfires of their houses.

I wonder most what happened in those last hours to Miss Smith. In Athens and Constantinople and Mytilene, and other places of the Near East, I had heard vaguely of this lady, always under the title of "Miss Smith of Smyrna," as though she owned the place, or at least governed it. I had no notion whether she was young or old, ugly or beautiful, but whenever her name was mentioned in casual conversation by British naval officers, commercial travellers, army men, newspaper correspondents and others whom chance had taken to Asia Minor, it was always spoken with a smile of admiration.

"I wonder what my aunt thinks of the situation," said a friend of mine—young Gerald Tuck, flag lieutenant of H.M.S. *Dragon*—as we sat one day in the Pera Palace

Hotel watching the parade of Armenians, Russians and Turks outside the windows, while we sipped cocktails and discussed the pro-Greek policy of the British Government, the troubles of "Tino," and pro-Turk activities of France and Italy.

"Why should your aunt think anything about it?" I asked, and he surprised me by his answer, spoken with a whimsical smile.

"Well, she happens to be Miss Smith of Smyrna!"

"Who on earth is Miss Smith—apart from being your distinguished aunt?" I inquired. "You're about the sixth man during the last week who has alluded to that mysterious lady as though she were equal in importance to the Sultan."

"More important, in a way," said Gerald; "though perhaps, as her unworthy nephew, I shouldn't say so. The Sultan doesn't count for anything with the real fellows at Angora. But Mustapha Kemal kisses the hand of my little old aunt, and there are lots of Turks who divide their reverence between the Prophet Mohammed and Miss Smith of Smyrna. Surprised you don't know her, old man!"

When I confessed my blank ignorance of her personality and prestige, Gerald Tuck gave me some enlightenment.

In his slangy way he began by saying she was a regular old sport, and the pluckiest old thing in Asia Minor, but after these generalities he condescended to a few particulars.

Miss Smith, it appeared, was the daughter of old Mediterranean Smith, who, away back in the early Victorian days, had built up the biggest trade in the Near East—general merchandise, spices, rugs, every blessed thing, said Gerald Tuck, bought or sold between Venice and Persia. Half a century ago he had established a big store in the Grand Rue de Pera—I must have passed it a score of times—another in Frank Street, Smyrna; a third in Athens. When he died, some time in the '80's, he left a fortune of something like six millions to Miss Smith, and his business as a going concern.

Her agents began to play tricks with the trade when the old man's tiger eyes were asleep at last. Armenians, Greeks,

Turks and Israelites thought it an easy game with a young woman—she was young in those days—as their new boss. They soon found out their mistake. Miss Smith came to Constantinople with a riding whip in one hand and a small bag containing her wardrobe in the other. After an examination of accounts she flogged her Armenian manager out of the stores—though she was a little wisp of a woman—and promoted a young Scot who had been one of the clerks.

In Smyrna she used her money to build schools for Christians and Turks, paid her teachers well, and at unexpected times came down from her house in Burnabat—away in the hills—riding on a white camel, to see that the children were getting value for her money. A bit of a martinet? Well, a sort of Queen Victoria of the Near East. Nothing small about her, and with big ideas and a strong hand. Kind-hearted too, as I should find if I were ever hard up for hospitality in Smyrna.

During the war she saved the Armenian and Greek communities in Smyrna from wholesale massacre, and had ridden out alone to the Turkish High Command to dress them down for the damnable cruelty of their treatment of the Christian minorities. It was owing to her influence, partly, anyhow, that the massacre ceased. They knew she was a friend of the Turks when they behaved decently. That was the secret of her pull. Old Mediterranean Smith had been pro-Turk up to his eyebrows, and had spent all his spare time hunting with Turkish pashas and entertaining them at Burnabat. As a young girl, Miss Smith had been playmate with their children—among them Mustapha Kemal—and had taught them tennis and other English games in her father's gardens. She'd hunted with them too, killed bears with them up in the hills, shown more courage than any of them. They called her The Rose of Burnabat in those early days, and now the sons of her father's old friends gave her the title of The Aunt of Islam.

"Of course," said Gerald Tuck, "you've heard about her pluck that day the Greek army landed at Smyrna, after the defeat of the Turks in the Great War?"

"Not a word," I told him.

He laughed and said, "Don't you read the papers?" and then agreed that I had been too busy writing chronicles elsewhere at that time of rapid history making.

There was an unresisted entry of the Greeks when their transports arrived off Smyrna. The balconies of all the Armenian houses were crowded with men and women waving handkerchiefs as the first Greek soldiers put off in boats for the landing stage, and at the open windows of the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace—what a name!—were British officers, Greek ladies, British and American correspondents, Red Cross women, and so on, all merry and bright. The Turks of Smyrna came out of their quarters, without enthusiasm—poor devils—but without fear. Some of them, the ordinary porters of the quays, helped to draw in the Greek boats. Shrill volleys of cheers and the clapping of hands resounded from all the balconies as the Greeks landed. Then, before the eyes of excited women and in the gaze of Christian children, the Greek soldiers started bayoneting the Turks and flinging their bodies into the sea. It was most deliberate and foul murder. It happened so quickly that no action could be taken by the commanders of the British and American warships lying alongside the quays. It was a little old lady who took action first—Miss Smith, who had been standing on the steps of the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace.

It was she who went down first, and alone among the murdering Greeks. She wore a white dust coat over her dress, and brown riding boots, as she had come riding into Smyrna on her old white camel, and she carried a little whip, which she slashed over the face of a Greek soldier as he advanced with a bayonet, already dripping blood, against a cowering Turk.

The little old lady called out something in Greek sharply and harshly, and the man halted a moment, staring at her with surprised, sombre eyes. But then he gave a shout, and, raising his bayonet, advanced again towards his victim. Miss Smith stood between him and the Turk. She used her whip again, and slashed the man's wrists so smartly that he gave a squeal of pain—he was only a boy—and dropped his rifle and bayonet. Miss Smith put her foot on his weapon and

boxed his ears with a resounding whack, first on one side, then on the other.

A group of Turkish women and children rushed towards her and took shelter behind her, pursued by Greeks who saw red and were shouting and laughing in a beastlike way. They must have seen something in the character and spirit of Miss Smith which sobered them. She stood with the Turkish children clinging to her skirts, with one hand upraised, and though she was but a frail old woman, she seemed to have a terrific dignity at that time. She spoke to the Greeks in their own tongue, and, as Gerald Tuck said, gave them hell, so that they shrank back, ashamed. After that some Greek officers surrounded her and threatened to shoot their own men if they touched another Turk.

"Pretty good for my revered aunt, don't you think?" asked Gerald Tuck, after his narrative.

"Perfectly splendid! I would like to get a glimpse of her."

"Nothing easier," he said. "If you don't mind morning and evening prayers—she keeps up the Victorian tradition—you could put in a week with me at the old lady's place when the *Dragon* goes to Smyrna. She'd be delighted, and it would do me a bit of good to have a companion who at least has the appearance of respectability. She regards me as a limb of Satan, destined to eternal perdition."

"Another proof of your aunt's remarkable sagacity," I observed, and had to stand him another drink to make amends.

As it happened, I was first in Smyrna, and had been there a week before I met young Tuck, by chance, in the Turkish bazaars at the end of Frank Street—now a heap of cindered ruins. He looked very bright and breezy, as usual, in his white ducks and naval cap, as he sauntered through the narrow passages with vaulted roofs, where old Turks sat cross-legged in their wooden booths, selling carpets from Ouchak and Angora, dried raisins and vegetables, strips of coloured silk for Turkish dresses, Sofrali linen, Manoussa cotton, German-made hardware, and all manner of rubbish from the East and West, drenched in the aroma of spices, moist sugar, oil and camels.

What attracted my attention to young Tuck of the Royal Navy, was a sudden flutter among a group of Turkish ladies who were doing their afternoon shopping. They were very smartly dressed in frocks of blue, black and grey silk, short enough to show their neat ankles and high-heeled shoes—worthy of Paris—and their veils were drawn on one side, revealing their oval faces and large lustrous eyes, touched up, like all Turkish girls' eyes, by the black pigment of kohl.

I had glanced at them as they handled some rolls of silk in one of the booths, which a white-bearded old Turk spread out over his knees, and then I noticed one of them blush deeply and pull her veil over her face with a quick gesture. At that signal her companions veiled themselves as quickly, so that their faces were completely hidden.

I wondered what had scared the birds, and turning round I saw Gerald Tuck, who, without any doubt at all, had given the glad eye to these Oriental beauties.

"Hullo, young fellow!" I said. "You'll get into trouble if you're not more discreet with those naval optics of yours."

He grinned cheerily and gave me a punch in the ribs.

"Hullo, old bean! Isn't it a damn shame these little pigeons pop behind their curtains at the first sign of Christian homage? They don't give a fellow a decent chance."

The *Dragon* had come to Smyrna, and Gerald had shore leave for a week, which he proposed to put in at his aunt's place. Would I come and keep him company? Much as he admired the old lady, he confessed that a little of her went a long way.

By a coincidence which Gerald Tuck did not find in the least remarkable, we met Miss Smith that afternoon at the house of Lieutenant Mazarakis, where I took him to tea. The boy was much taken with the children, whose pretty ways and broken English amused him vastly, and he entertained them so much by a series of conjuring tricks and other parlour games that I was quite cut out in their affection. Madame Mazarakis fell in love with the boy, in a motherly way, and confided to me that the presence of an English battleship at Smyrna gave her a sense of reassurance.

"Great Britain," she said, "is on the side of the Greeks.

They will never allow the Turks to retake Smyrna. That thought gives me courage when I am most fearful."

I didn't tell the lady that I had grave doubts whether Great Britain would give any help with armed force if the Greeks could not defend their own position. England, after her exhaustion in the Great War, was all for peace, and could not afford either money or men for any conflict in the Near East.

It was after that conversation that Gerald Tuck gave an exclamation of surprise:

"By all that's wonderful, there's my sacred aunt!"

Through the window looking onto the road I saw the unusual sight of two European ladies mounted on camels, one white and one brown, preceded by an old Turk sitting on the rump of a little grey donkey. They all halted at the gate, and the Turk, getting off his donkey, helped one of the ladies to dismount from the white camel. She was a little old lady in a long white dust coat, carrying a parasol of black silk with a long fringe, and I knew at once that this must be Miss Smith of Smyrna.

The excitement of the Mazarakis children, and their cry of "Mees Smeet!" proved my guess to be right.

Madame Mazarakis rose and smoothed her dress nervously.

"A visit from Miss Smith!" she said in an awed voice, as though a queen had arrived without warning.

Miss Smith advanced down the garden path, holding her parasol high—a stiff-backed little lady, with a thin, sharp-featured face, piercing grey eyes, and a most resolute look. Behind her came another lady, who had dismounted from the brown camel—a young woman in an English-looking frock of white drill, and at first glance, and second, amazingly good-looking. Not English, certainly, but with large, liquid eyes, dark brown, as I saw later in our acquaintance, and a pale oval face with fine features of an Eastern type.

"By Jove," said Gerald Tuck, drawing in his breath, "Miss Halid has developed into a choice blossom! Last time I saw her she was a lanky kid with rat-tail hair. How these young things grow!"

"Who is Miss Halid?" I inquired.

It was not then, but afterwards, in Miss Smith's house, that he told me that this girl had been adopted by Miss Smith—the waif of some Turkish woman who had been killed in a Greek massacre. Miss Smith had found the child alive among a heap of Turkish bodies in a half-burned village among the hills beyond Burnabat, and had brought her home, where she had stayed ever since.

The old lady and this girl came into the drawing-room of Madame Mazarakis, and Miss Smith did not show the least astonishment when she was greeted by her nephew:

"Hello, aunt! Going strong, I hope? I see you still ride the old white camel, like a lady in a circus!"

She gave him her cheek to kiss, and though she spoke severely, had a glint of humour in her keen grey eyes:

"Well, Gerald, I see your manners haven't improved since we last met. As for your morals, no doubt the least said the better. In the navy there are more souls lost than drowned."

This epigram made young Gerald laugh boisterously, at the end of which ebullition of high spirits he introduced me as his very particular pal.

The old lady gave me her little wrinkled, gipsy-like hand, on which I noticed some handsome diamond rings.

She looked at me for a moment with her searching grey eyes, and didn't seem certain of my respectability or general character.

"What are you doing in Smyrna?" she asked, rather snapshily. "Not one of Lloyd George's agents, I hope, inciting the Greeks to claim an empire which will be the ruin of 'em?"

I disclaimed all such responsibility and explained that I was a humble newspaper man, taking a look around.

"You may see more than you bargained for," she answered grimly, and then, turning away from me, poked one finger into Gerald's shoulder, and said, "You haven't said how-de-do to Halid, and the child looks as timid as a lamb in the presence of a wolf."

Gerald Tuck and the girl smiled at each other and shook hands, but for once Gerald was shy and embarrassed—he

who gave the glad eye to every pretty girl whom he met on his way through the world! I think he was rather overwhelmed by the remarkable beauty of this young lady, whom he had remembered only as a child, on his last visit to Smyrna.

Madame Mazarakis directed a little maid to arrange the tea tray and was nervous to the point of foolishness at what she seemed to consider the immense honour of this visit from Miss Smith.

That old lady, I remember, ate an astonishing number of Greek buns, and directed most of her attention to the pretty children of our hostess, with whom she spoke in their own tongue.

At that time I saw, as I thought and think still, the immense love and tenderness of this strange old woman for these children of rival races, Greek and Turk—it was clear to me now that Miss Halid was of Turkish origin—whom she tried to protect with equal benevolence from the outrageous cruelties that threatened them in Asia Minor, where she had made her home. The hard lines of her face softened as she spoke to them and caressed the dark head of the youngest boy, while her old-maid soul shone with mother love through those grey eyes, which had seemed to me like gimlets when she had taken her measure of me.

"They're adorable, these Greek mites," she said to me presently, as the two babies sat in her lap and played with her diamond rings, fascinated by the sparkle of them. Then she gave a deep sigh, and a moment later asked, in her queer, abrupt way, an amazing question: "Have you any bowels of compassion, young man?"

I murmured something about not having the instincts of a Nero, but she ignored my answer.

"If you have any mission as a writer, beyond sensation-mongering," she said, "you ought to do something to save another massacre of innocents."

I asked her, "What massacre?"

"Save for the mercy of God," she said solemnly, "that preposterous treaty made by the Allies with Turkey will lead to a great tragedy hereabouts."

The word "Allies" seemed to irritate her as she spoke it.

"Allies! A precious alliance between France and Great Britain—snarling at each other like cats and dogs! Up to their eyes in intrigue against each other from Syria to Constantinople!"

When she rose presently she took one of Madame Mazarakis' hands in her own and caressed it a little.

"You are a good mother, and a brave woman. But my wish for all Greek women and their little ones is for them to be far away from Smyrna."

Madame Mazarakis went white to the lips.

"My husband——" she stammered.

"Yes," said Miss Smith, "your husband believes that Greece will regain her old supremacy in Asia Minor. Tell him from me that he is a fool, like all his comrades."

She stooped to kiss the little ones, and then turned to me and gave me her hand.

"You seem honest," she said. "Come and stay with me a week, with that impudent nephew of mine. Your old bedroom is ready, Gerald."

"Excellent!" said Gerald. "Halid and I will have some tennis together."

He spoke in his usual light-hearted way, but I could see as plain as a pikestaff that he had gone all soppy under the gaze of that strangely beautiful girl with her long-lashed eyes and Oriental grace.

Afterwards he said as much to me, when we walked back through the Turkish quarter to the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace, wedged for a while against the booths while a long caravan of brown, mangy camels, heavily laden with bales of merchandise, thrust their splay feet into the ruts and ambled past.

"Gee whiz!" he cried, thrusting back his peaked cap. "That girl Halid makes me feel like Omar Khayyâm!"

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!"

He quoted the familiar old verse with an emotion that was half sham and half sincere, and was quite oblivious of the

looks of hatred that came from beneath the shaggy eyebrows of five old Turks, smoking their nargiles round a little brazier by the corner of the bazaar, at this young Christian dog in naval uniform with shining eyes and sonorous voice.

So, by a little thread of circumstance such as Fate weaves about the lives of men, I found myself a guest with Gerald Tuck, in the country house of Miss Smith of Smyrna, away between the hills in the village of Burnabat.

I remember the drive I took with Gerald to the old lady's place, in a cart drawn by two Anatolian ponies—sturdy little fellows with long tails like Arab steeds—because it was the first time I had seen Smyrna from the heights of the Turkish quarter above the port, and now that it is all a blackened ruin with the charred bones of Greek women and children under its fallen stones, I look back in remembrance of the beauty of that view and its semblance of peace.

We went out of the bazaar, with its crowded booths, through the street called Kallili Djadessi, to the Bridge of Caravans across the tawny river of Oued-Meles. On its steep banks were a few wooden houses, closely shuttered, and above them rose tall cypress trees, cutting the absolute blue of the sky like black spears. Here and there beneath their shadow were Turkish graveyards with tombstones, cut at the top into the form of the fez, leaning sideways, as though tired of standing guard over the dead. A few little Turks waded in the river, down which came the warm breeze known as the *imbat*. Across the bridge passed a patrol of Greek soldiers, singing. Turkish women veiled their faces before them, and an old Turk, squatting under a wall, spat as they passed.

Dark and sombre rose Mount Pagus above us, with the fortress built on the ruins which were the palace of Alexander the Great, who founded this city in the dawn of history. But below us where all the city was outspread, the hot sunshine glowed warm on its huddled roofs of brown tiles and its whitewashed walls, while in a great curve the gulf stretched round more deeply blue than the sky above, and not less serene. The Greek gunboat *Imbros* lay at anchor there, with its metal work sparkling, and H.M.S. *Dragon*—Gerald's ship

—was farther out from the shore with its guns reflected in the mirror below.

“Rum old place!” said Gerald, gazing at the scene. “I seem to remember something about it in my school books at Winchester.”

“I’m afraid it will be mentioned in history again,” I said and at that moment I felt, in spite of the hot sunshine, a queer little chill down the spine. It was the foreboding of tragedy I had had in the house of Madame Mazarakis.

“Can’t think why my remarkable old aunt likes it so much,” said Gerald, yawning in a bored way. “With all her ducats, I’d take a house in civilisation, and live among people who wash now and then.”

Miss Smith’s house looked as though it had been transplanted from that place which Gerald had in his mind as civilisation—little old England. Outside the gates a long camel caravan had halted by a drinking well, and here, on the white, dusty road, with cypresses and minarets pointing skywards from a village below, was the old, old East, with its colour, its silence, its smells, its mystery. But inside the gates there were lawns and flower beds, prim and neatly kept as though in Surrey, and beyond, a square-built house with a stucco front exactly like any mid-Victorian mansion built in Clapham Park for a city merchant with side whiskers and a prosperous business.

Its furniture, and the whole spirit of the place, as I saw when we entered, belonged to that period. In the hall were engravings of the British royal family, from paintings by Winterhalter, showing Queen Victoria as a young woman, and the future King Edward as an infant in arms, and the future Empress of Germany as a little girl in a white frock with long trousers.

The dining room, into which we were ushered by an elderly butler who looked as if he had just stepped out of St. James’s Square, was crammed with heavy mahogany furniture and shaded from the hot light of Asia by plush curtains tied up in silk sashes exactly like those which outraged my childish sensibilities when I used to visit a great-aunt of mine, more years ago than I care to remember!

This house was in the heart of Asia Minor, but it belonged to the spirit of England of 1850, and had not changed by a hair's breadth since.

Gerald Tuck regarded it all as a great jest, and laughed boisterously at the antimacassars, or lace coverlets which hung over the backs of plush-covered chairs.

"Did you ever think you'd see such things in Smyrna?" he said. "My aunt is the most eccentric old creature since the time of Queen Elizabeth."

Whether she heard this remark I do not know, but she came into the room at that moment, and her shrewd eyes glinted with amusement at her impudent nephew, who tried to cover himself by a cheery salutation:

"Morning, aunt! Have you been for a trot on Mustapha to-day?"

Mustapha was the white camel, which Miss Smith fed every morning with devoted affection and rode every afternoon for his health's sake, and hers.

"I trust you will behave with decency and respect to my habits of life while you are a guest in my household," she answered with severity. "I am delighted to welcome you, my dear, but please remember that old age has its peculiarities and its privileges."

Life was not without its comedy in this little English oasis in the village of Burnabat, at the back of Smyrna. Gerald Tuck, with his irresistible sense of humour and high spirits, could not resist the temptation of teasing his old aunt, for whom secretly he had a real affection and admiration; and even at morning and evening prayers, which she conducted with great dignity and solemnity in the presence of the butler and two English maids—the Turkish servants and stablemen being exempt from the ceremony—he could not refrain from winking at me and making comical grimaces between his fingers.

Romance, too, was not absent from my week's sojourn in this strange household, for Gerald Tuck fell hopelessly and joyously in love with Halid, his aunt's ward, whose beauty put a spell on him and whose sentiment he awakened by his amorous pursuit—though she was as timid as a doe and as

haughty as a daughter of the Sultan. The Turkish blood and character of the girl were evident in every gesture she made, in the grace of her body, in the smile of her long-lashed eyes and in the quick changes of temper that caused her to be merry and sad as the sunlight chases shadows.

Gerald made her laugh, but made her angry, too, and sometimes she fled from him across the lawn where they played tennis, and once, as he told me, he found her weeping under the cypress trees behind the house, because she thought he mocked at her.

But my remembrance of that visit to Miss Smith of Smyrna is not made up of comedy or romance, but rather is darkened by the reality of tragedy which came as a message to this house, and as a warning to the Greek people and to Europe. It was a message from Islam and the Mohammedan world, and though it was brought in friendship, it threatened massacre and all the horror of war as it is made by the Crescent against the Cross, when Turkish bayonets are greedy for Christian blood.

The messenger came one evening at dusk to the gate of Miss Smith's house. It was a young Turk, mounted on a little Arab horse, and I happened to be standing in the hall with Gerald at the open door, as his figure came riding up the drive. The young man dismounted, raised his hand to his fez, and asked in very good English whether Miss Smith was at home.

Gerald took it upon himself to answer, and I noticed that he spoke with a slight hostility.

"I'll see—if you care to wait. What name shall I give?"

The man hesitated a moment, measured Gerald with keen eyes, and then smiled.

"Tell her that the son of an old playmate craves a word with her in strictest secrecy."

"You do not care to give your name?" asked Gerald coldly.

"It is better not, if you please," answered the young Turk politely.

"Then I will not mention Ahmed Mejid Pasha," said Gerald, with what I thought was a note of irony in his voice.

The young Turk gave a slight start, and for a moment his

hand went to his belt, to which a holster was strapped. Then he spoke quietly again:

"Have I the honour of your acquaintance, sir?"

"I had the pleasure of seeing you once in Constantinople," said Gerald. "You were then a prisoner of the British Mission, on a charge of conspiring against the Sultan."

"That is true," said the Turk gravely. "I had the good fortune to be liberated. I trust that, as a friend of Miss Smith, whom I regard as my second mother, you will keep my name and history secret in Smyrna?"

"Certainly," said Gerald carelessly.

"Otherwise I may be a prisoner again, in hands less friendly than the British. I come here with a message of friendship to that very dear lady, Miss Smith, whom all Turks revere."

"My aunt," said Gerald.

"Your aunt! Then, indeed, I need have no fear!"

Gerald's announcement of his relationship seemed to relieve the young Turk of all anxiety. He saluted again, by touching his fez with the tips of his fingers above the forehead, and then his breast, which is the Turkish sign of faith.

"Come this way," said Gerald, and he led the young man to the room that Miss Smith called her study.

Before he could knock at the door the old lady opened it and stood there, looking out into the hall. At the sight of her, Ahmed Mejid Pasha gave a little cry of delight, and striding forward bent very low, and seizing Miss Smith's hands kissed them effusively. To my surprise the old lady returned this greeting and kissed the young man on both cheeks.

"My dear boy!" she said, as though it were a mother speaking to her son. "How enormously you have grown since I saw you last! But, good gracious me, that is ten years ago!"

The young Turk laughed and followed Miss Smith into her study and shut the door.

It was two hours later when the door opened again, and during that time Gerald and I, sitting in the next room, heard their voices—mostly the man's voice in what seemed like

an interminable narrative, interrupted now and then by questions from Miss Smith.

Gerald gave me some clue to the man's personality and purpose.

"He's the son of old Ahmed Mejid, who was Foreign Minister of Abdul Hamid. This fellow's father was my aunt's playmate as a child in this house. Her lover afterwards, I'm told, by those who know. Queer to think of my withered old aunt inspiring passion in the heart of a Turk! This lad was up to his neck in intrigue in Constantinople, until foolishly enough he was pushed out by the British. The worst thing possible! Of course he skipped off to Angora, and now he's one of Mustapha Kemal Pasha's cavalry leaders."

"What's he doing in Smyrna?" I asked.

And Gerald's answer was, "Nothing good, you bet! But he showed pluck in coming. The Greeks would wring his neck if they caught him."

After that two hours the door of Miss Smith's study opened again and we heard their voices in the hall. They spoke all but a few words in Turkish, and then I heard Miss Smith say good-bye in English.

"Good-bye, dear lady," answered the young Turk.

For a moment there was silence. Perhaps he kissed the old woman's hand again. Then she spoke once more, with painful emotion:

"Ahmed—for your father's sake—and he was chivalrous—be merciful in the hour of victory, if that should be yours. My God and yours—our same Eternal Father—hates those who are without compassion for helpless women and little children and those who are defenceless. There has been too much blood and agony in Asia Minor, and the cry of murdered children reaches to the ears of Allah in whom you have faith."

Some such words as these she spoke, though not perhaps, exactly as I have written.

The man answered with equal emotion:

"Mustapha Kemal Pasha is a noble leader, dear lady. He will restrain his followers, so far as human nature allows. Alas, that is not far! For if the Greeks pillage and murder

in their usual way, the swords of our men will be hungry for vengeance. It is that I fear."

A few minutes later there was the clip-clop of hoofs down the carriage drive to the garden gate. Ahmed Mejid Pasha came in the dusk and went in darkness.

That night at dinner Miss Smith looked very old and very grey. Not once did she speak of her visitor, but towards the end of the meal she brightened a little, for the sake, I think, of the girl Halid, who glanced at her anxiously from time to time. She told little anecdotes of her early days, when she had gone hunting in the hills, and then spoke of her children—Greeks and Turks—for whom she had founded schools in Smyrna, and whom she loved without prejudice of race or creed.

Later, when Miss Halid had gone to bed, the old lady summoned Gerald and myself to her study.

I remember her now, as she sat in a high-backed chair, looking very tiny and frail, yet with a spiritual strength in her keen, sharp-featured face.

"My dear," she said, "you know I had a visit to-day from the son of an old friend. He tells me, Gerald, that you know his name and rank, and trusts to your honour and mine not to mention it beyond this house."

Gerald said, "Righto, aunt!" and with that she was satisfied, as indeed she might be, knowing the honest character of the boy.

"He came with a message," said Miss Smith; and for a moment her face twitched with an expression of pain.

"What message?" asked Gerald, and for once he spoke gravely.

The old woman searched him with her eyes, as though wondering how far she might trust him, and then seemed reassured.

"It was, of course, deeply private, though, for the sake of peace, he allows me to make use of it at my discretion. The army of Islam—of Mustapha Kemal Pasha—is ready to attack the Greeks, and is certain of victory."

Gerald gave a low whistle and sat up in his chair.

"They wish to avoid the blood and massacres that will

inevitably drench this country if that happens," said Miss Smith; and again a spasm passed over her face. "There is only one means by which these horrors can be averted."

She looked at me, as though I might guess what that way might be, but I asked the word, "How?"

"By the rapid withdrawal of the Greek army from Smyrna and Thrace."

It was my turn to sit up in my chair and draw a deep breath.

"That will never happen," I said. "There are too many interests involved, and too many passions."

That remark of mine angered her intensely. She struck the arms of her chair with both hands, and her eyes were afire as she turned them upon me.

"Too many interests involved! Yes. And too many villainies and stupidities among the powers and politicians who are running the world and condemning its innocents to death! Why does the British Government support the Greek claim to Smyrna, which their army can never hold by their own power? Are British forces coming here to defend this unhappy population when the Greek army is routed—or before? Tell me that!"

"I'm afraid not," I said. "Our people are for peace, and sick of war."

"Then why adopt a policy which leads to war?" asked the old lady. "It is madness! Every man in the Mohammedan world will die rather than submit to Asia Minor being parcelled out among the Greeks. I have lived among them all my life. They have been good friends to me. Old woman as I am, I would have made a better peace with them than that treaty, which was botched up by politicians greedy for power and drunk with victory."

"French as well as English," I said; "pro-Turk as well as pro-Greek; Italian as well as French."

The old lady struck the arm of her chair again.

"Do not talk foolishness like that to me," she said angrily. "France and Italy and England bargained with each other for their own selfishness, forgetting the interests of millions of humble folk who wish to live in peace. Now they quarrel

with each other, like thieves dissatisfied with their share of loot. Not for love of the Turk, but to get even with England, France sends arms and munitions to Mustapha Kemal. Not for love of Greece but for self-interest, or for sheer folly, England incites the Greeks in their imperialism, and both sides will betray both sides if it suits their purpose."

"You are very severe," I said. "We're not as bad as that, though I agree as to the stupidity of our politicians."

She ignored my words and continued her excited monologue.

"They call me pro-Turk," she said bitterly. "The English mission here in Smyrna call me the old Turkish woman, and suspect me of sending news to Angora, because Mustapha Kemal learned his English in this house. I am no more pro-Turk than pro-Greek! It is because I love the Greek people in Asia Minor—have I not taught them in my schools and loved their little ones?—that I wish to save them from further massacres and a renewal of those dreadful horrors that come with war. Now it is too late."

"Why too late?" asked Gerald.

"Have I not told you?" she answered. "In a few weeks Mustapha Kemal will advance with his army. He is a great general, and more of a soldier than that fat old man who sits in the Greek headquarters, ignorant and vain and futile."

"The Greeks can put up a good scrap," said Gerald. "They may knock hell out of old man Turk."

"Don't be a fool, child!" said Miss Smith.

"Sorry, aunt!" said Gerald with great cheerfulness, and he winked at me.

The old lady seemed to be thinking very deeply. She sat silent for quite a while, with her little wrinkled hands playing with some jet beads on her dress.

"There's one man who might listen to me, and act in time," she said at last. "He's a fool, of course, but not quite such a fool as he's painted."

"Who's that?" asked Gerald.

"Constantine."

"Tino? That blighter?"

The old lady nodded and said, "He's got courage, and is

obstinate in his decisions. He might listen to me and avert the disaster that is coming."

She rose from her chair and walked nervously up and down the room with quick little steps, while Gerald watched her curiously, puffing at a cigarette.

Presently she stopped and spoke to us again.

"Yes, it's my duty. I'll go and see the king in Athens. I will tell him what I know. I may be the messenger of God's mercy."

"My dear aunt!" said Gerald, sitting up and throwing away his cigarette. "You'll probably catch your death of cold on the boat and do no good whatever at the end of the journey. My advice to you is to sit tight here. Even if the Turks do advance they won't hurt you."

"They'll hurt my little ones," said the old lady. "In peace the Turk is a good man. In war he has no pity for man, woman or child."

Nothing would divert the old lady from this idea in her head—a journey to Athens, to warn the king of coming danger and defeat.

It was not my place to dissuade her, and Gerald's advice was ignored as though a child spoke.

It was for his sake as well as out of admiration for an old woman's pluck that I offered to accompany her to Athens on my way back to England.

I think she was glad of that offer, and the little help I could give her in the way of carrying her handbag to the boat.

"I shall be back within a week, my dear," she told the girl Halid, whom she embraced tenderly. "You will be safe here in this old house with my faithful servants."

The girl wept bitterly at parting with the old lady, but I think some of her tears were for Gerald, who was returning with us to his ship. They had a little love passage in the garden, I think, and Gerald told me afterwards that he had kissed the girl, and promised to come back to her.

All the servants, Turks and English, gathered round that carriage drawn by two Anatolian ponies before we drove off and the old white camel, Mustapha, snuffled and stamped as

though indignant that his beloved mistress should travel without him.

"Be a good boy!" she called out to this hideous beast.

At the gateway Gerald and I turned in the carriage to wave our hands to Miss Halid, who stood there weeping, and yet laughing a little because of Gerald's ardent demonstration with his naval cap. It was the last time I saw Miss Smith's stucco-fronted house and her smooth lawns and flower beds—this English oasis in Asia Minor. No eyes will ever see it again, for the house is a black ruin of charred timbers and brick, and the flower beds were trampled into mud by Turkish cavalry.

On the way through Smyrna, I was astonished by the royal progress of the old lady. Certainly she had the love of this people. Turkish women came to the doors to raise their hands as she passed, and little Turkish children ran alongside the carriage for a way with shouts of "Mees Smeet! Mees Smeet!" It was the same in the Armenian and Greek quarters, where the children were coming out of school—some of the schools she had founded for them, and maintained at her own cost. They greeted her appearance with shrill cheers, and one pretty girl threw into her carriage a handful of flowers she had plucked from some garden. Miss Smith turned to me once and put her hand on mine.

"I would give my old life to save these little ones," she said. "Perhaps God will bless my journey's end."

If I remember rightly, it was a voyage of sixteen hours to Athens, in a little boat that had once been the steam yacht of Vanderbilt and was now converted into a passenger ship and named the *Polikos*. It was vastly overcrowded with Greek officers and men, a group of Italian soldiers and a number of Israelites. I managed to secure a cabin for Miss Smith, and had a berth for myself amidships, with Greek officers above and below, violently and emotionally sick when the sea rose after dusk and made the boat pitch in a most unpleasant way.

At Athens the old lady and I put up at the Grande Bretagne, a very beautiful hotel, not far from the king's palace.

That very morning, with indomitable energy, the old lady, who had passed a sleepless night, as she told me, drove in a hired motor car to the palace; and I think I see her now, as she sat there, under a black parasol, with the hot sun of Athens pouring into the car and dazzling so fiercely upon the white marble-fronted houses that it was painful to the eyes. She looked to me like a little old queen, and it was with the dignity of such that she bowed to some Greek officers who passed and saluted her.

"My dear," she said to me, "if you were not a journalist, I should ask you to pray for me now. I go to a meeting which may save the lives of thousands of poor, simple folks, and innocent little children. There is at least the chance of a miracle."

Not more than that, I thought; and miracles, alas, have not been frequent of late.

And yet I think I said something like a prayer for the old woman as I walked through the king's gardens—open to the public in part—and then sat on the terrace of an open-air café looking towards Mount Hymettus, where once Homer lay and listened to the bees, and to the ruin of the Acropolis, where the sunlight fell upon the amber-tinted pillars of the Parthenon, and the Temple of Athena, under a cloudless sky of fathomless blue, as when Euripides described the Athenians of old "marching through an ether of surpassing brightness."

Some Greek schoolboys went singing towards the white arena where, three thousand years ago, other boys of their race threw the discus, as they were going to do, for some contest between their schools. In white vests and shorts, their necks and arms and legs were burnt the colour of terra cotta, and in their beauty of youth they were not unworthy of those young athletes whose forms were carved in marble by a master hand, for the world's delight.

Sitting there, in this scene where all the glory of Greek history had passed, where those very stones around had been worn by the feet of men who gave the grace of art to life, and a philosophy to which we still turn for wisdom, I was moved by the thought of the tragedy that seemed to be coming

swiftly to the modern Greeks and was filled with pity for the wreck of their illusions, hopes, ambitions, sacrifice. They had gone back to Asia Minor, lured by the old tradition of Greek empire, finding old stones as its proof in history, and remnants of their people. They had looked with greedy eyes toward Constantinople, in which they had founded the Byzantine Empire as a bulwark of Christendom against the infidel. There was an old prophecy that Constantine would come back there, that the Mass of the Greek Church would be resumed in San Sofia, from the point where it had broken off with a cry of terror when Mohammed II rode in with his Turks and slew until the walls were splashed with blood. It was that legend of the coming back of Constantine which had uplifted the Greek people and inspired their army. Now an old woman was with the king in whom their hopes were centred, telling him, perhaps, that defeat was certain, and that to save his people from massacre he must surrender their claims!

Strange episode of history! Fantastic that an old lady named Miss Smith should go on such a mission! Incredible in its absurdity, when one believed, as I did, and do now, that Miss Smith of Smyrna, this shrewd old maid, beloved by Turks and Greeks alike, had received a message of fate from Mustapha Kemal Pasha, and knew the truth of it.

I saw her coming out of the king's garden in her hired motor car. She sat with her hands clasped in her lap, and her head bent.

I held up my hand to stop the car, and took a seat beside her. "What news?" I asked.

She put her hand on mine with that little gesture which was a habit with her.

"I have failed," she said simply. "They jeered at me as a mad old woman."

Presently she told me that she had given way to anger. She had threatened those who jeered with a tragedy that would make them weep blood for their folly. She had told Constantine that his crown was worth no more than a jester's cap and damned him as the assassin of his race. They had turned her out, as an old lunatic.

"Now I go back to Smyrna," she said, "to await the red flame that will rise before the flag of Islam."

I tried to persuade her to stay in Athens a while, but she spoke of Halid, her best beloved, and of the children who believed in her as a protectress.

"Because once I stopped a massacre of Turks," she said, "they may listen to an old woman when she prays for mercy on the Greeks."

That very night, without rest, the old lady embarked again for Smyrna, and I shall not see her again in this life.

The attack by Mustapha Kemal began three weeks to the day after her return, and the whole world knows the tragedy of Smyrna, the burning of that fair city, the driving of Christians into its hungry flames, the bayoneting of women and children, the cry of agony that went out to sea above the roar of fire, and was heard by naval men watching from their ships.

Gerald Tuck was there, on the *Dragon*, and knew that somewhere in that hell was the old lady, his aunt, and the young girl whose beauty had put a spell on him.

From an American Red Cross worker I heard of Miss Smith in her last hour. She had come down into Smyrna with Miss Halid and stayed with the Greek children and teachers of one of her schools. When the first squadron of Turkish cavalry rode down the quay side she went out to meet them and spoke to the commander, who was Ahmed Mejid Pasha. He bent down over his saddle and spoke to her gently.

It was not the regular cavalry that began the massacre, but the irregulars who came with them. The leaders tried to restrain their men, but could do nothing when their madness began.

Among the houses that went up in flames was that of Lieutenant Mazarakis, where I had taken tea so often with a woman who was afraid, and children who sang to me.

It is certain that Miss Smith of Smyrna died in the fire of her schoolhouse, where many little ones of Greece whom she had tried to save went with her, as I verily believe, to that great peace where no cruelty of men may enter in.

III: THE BEGGAR OF BERLIN

I WAS standing outside one of the antiquity shops of the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, studying some fine old engravings displayed in the window, when a voice over my shoulder spoke to me in excellent English:

"For the love of God, sir, will you give me a few marks?"

I turned round, astonished by the way in which these words were spoken, not whiningly, but in a very pleasant and courteous voice.

There were many beggars in Berlin four years after the war, at a time when German marks had dropped in exchange value to twenty a penny; and as an Englishman I had been accosted often enough by hungry-looking creatures slouching through the streets, especially at night; but no German beggar had spoken to me in English, or in such a tone.

I was still more astonished by the figure of the man who had spoken. He was young and singularly handsome, with a finely sculptured face and blue eyes; but his whole appearance was extraordinary in the Wilhelmstrasse, fairly crowded at that hour in the afternoon with well-dressed Germans of a business type and foreign visitors searching for bargains in the shops, as I was, while marks were cheap in exchange. He was unshaven, and had a softly curling beard. His hair, unkempt and matted, was so long that it touched his shoulders. He wore nothing but a brown linen shirt, open at the neck, a pair of cotton drawers, above the knees, and a pair of sandals. He carried a tall stick, cut from a hedge; and with his bare limbs and neck, deeply bronzed by the sun, he had the look of a young shepherd, or, as I thought afterwards, of John the Baptist in a picture by Titian. I noticed that he had a tin whistle slung round his neck on a piece of knotted string.

As I took out my pocket-book, he spoke again, with hardly any foreign accent.

"Do not give me more than five marks at the most. On twenty marks a day I can keep alive, and I do not accept more than five marks at a time."

"Surely," I said, "you cannot live on twenty marks!"

I remembered the price of my last meal at the Hotel Wotan. It had cost me seven hundred and fifty marks, and was ridiculously cheap when reckoned in English exchange.

"It is enough for a little bread," he answered, "and that is enough for life. Here, in Berlin, there are many people who are destroying their souls by over-eating, while others starve. One cannot love God and one's belly at the same time. By denying the flesh, the soul, I find, has liberty."

I gave him five marks—worth less than a farthing in English money—and he said, "in giving this your gain is greater than mine, if it is with charity in your heart."

I wondered if he were mad; and it seems to me a confession of my own material outlook on life, as well as a reflection on our social code as a whole, that one should think a man mad because he dresses in rags and speaks gently of charity. Certainly, in accepting my gift, such as it was, he seemed to confer a favour rather than receive one. As an incurable student of human nature, I was much struck by this young German, unlike any others I had seen, and tried to get into further conversation with him.

"How is it you are a beggar?" I asked. "And yet at the same time you are certainly a gentleman, and speak English as well as I do, and perhaps better."

He smiled at me in a friendly way, and I was impressed by a kind of noble simplicity of manner in him, and what I can only call beauty of expression.

"As for my English," he said, "I had an English mother. I am a gentleman because of her. I have adopted begging as a more honest way to live than that of my father. He was a robber in a large way of business. I go among the people of misery and comfort them a little by good old tales and pleasant tunes. You see, I play this whistle."

He unslung the tin whistle which hung round his neck, and putting it to his lips played a merry little tune—merry as an old folk song that has the love of life in its lilt. There,

in the Wilhelmstrasse, near the British Embassy, this strange young man played as if he and I were alone in a German wood. Two Germans, carrying flat, black-leather bags, like all men of business in Berlin, turned round and stared at him contemptuously a moment, and then passed on with the anxious look of men who, like most others at that time in Berlin, had been gambling in marks and badly caught by the financial stampede which was bringing German currency to the level of waste paper or Austrian kronen.

Two small boys who had come trudging up the Wilhelmstrasse with school satchels over their shoulders, stopped to listen to the tune, and grinned with delight in their eyes. They seemed to know the young man, for they shouted out, "*Guten Tag, Hans von Menzel!*" He answered in German. "Good day, little mice! Shall I play you the oldest tune that was ever known in Germany, before Berlin was built, and when there was love in the world?"

"Yes, play it!" shouted the boys.

The young German raised his hedge stick to me, as a soldier does his sword in salute.

"We shall meet again," he said, "before our civilisation slips into the great abyss. God is weary of the folly of men. *Auf Wiedersehen!*"

He went down the Wilhelmstrasse, playing his tin whistle, with a small boy on either side of him. People coming up the street glanced back at him, some with smiles, some with scornful eyes, one or two with pity that so handsome a fellow should be so poverty-stricken or so crazed.

That was the first time I saw Hans von Menzel, and I should have forgotten him, perhaps, or merely remembered him as a strange type of humanity in my mental portrait gallery of odd fellows, if he had not come my way again during my stay in Germany.

I was sitting alone at a little table in the great dining room of the Hotel Wotan. Without a companion that evening, I was studying, with no sense of loneliness, the varied types of people dining around me. They seemed to me, not unfairly, I think, the worst assembly of men and women, with a few decent exceptions, that could be found together in any

room in the world. They seemed to me to represent all that is most evil in our modern civilisation, and especially in this Europe of ours after the war.

They were mostly foreigners, who were gorging themselves here, in the marble halls of a hotel of which the Kaiser had once been a shareholder, as his bust over the high sculptured mantelpiece reminded one, in defiance of the Republic. They were the international vultures who gather in the capitals of Europe, in which there is financial decay and corruption upon which they thrive. They were the gamblers in German marks; the Valuta hogs, as they were called; the pawnbrokers of German wealth and the cheapjacks of German art, antiquities, furniture, jewels; buying cheap from fallen families; raking the shops for treasures which they bought when marks were at their lowest before prices rose; lending money at enormous rates of interest with stranglehold securities on German industry, and doing every shady kind of business with a hard-pressed people in a thousand ways that are mysterious to me.

The Hotel Wotan had raised its prices three times during the month in which I had been in Berlin, when the mark had fallen precipitously; but in spite of that increase in cost, one could still dine luxuriously for what represented a few shillings in English money. For fourpence, for instance, at what was then the rate of exchange, one could get the best Rhine wine—Niersteiner or Rudesheimer—one of those tall, thin-necked bottles which are the best table decorations of a German banquet. The people here seemed to wallow, bodily and mentally, in this cheap chance of gluttony. They ate and drank with greedy eyes, as well as greedy mouths. The fat fingers of their women were loaded with rings bought in the trinket shops of Unter den Linden. The men wore new wrist watches and flashed diamond-studded cigarette cases. One party near me, curiously stunted, coarsely made, loud-mouthed men and women, speaking German with a foreign accent, were drinking liqueurs between their courses of meat, and bullying the waiters, who were extraordinarily patient, I thought, with their bad manners.

It was one of the waiters who interpreted my own thoughts.

He was a little, vivacious, good-natured fellow, who seemed to have taken a particular fancy to me because I happened to know most of the old danger spots in Flanders, where he had fought against the English in the war. He had been a lieutenant in the German army, and explained his present position as a waiter at the Hotel Wotan by a shrug of the shoulders and the words, "One must earn a living somehow." He told me that several of the waiters were men of good family like himself. They earned small salaries—only eight hundred and fifty marks a month, which, he said, was not enough to keep a rat alive in Berlin—but they made up a living wage by the tips they received from Americans and English.

"Most of this crowd here," he said, speaking in a low voice, "ought to be put in a death chamber with poison gas. I'm a pacifist after the war, but these people make me feel murderous."

"They are not a good type," I agreed.

"They are fattening on the ruin of Germany."

"Germany has not reached ruin yet," I said. "Everybody seems to have plenty of paper money and it still buys them the pleasure of life. England is in a far worse state, with her unemployed and overtaxed people."

He brushed some crumbs off the table and looked at me with searching eyes. "Do you want to know the truth about Germany?" he asked me.

"That's what I'm here for," I answered.

He told me his view of the truth, with a kind of quiet passion and what I am sure was absolute sincerity.

"My country is on the edge of the great crash. This German civilisation of ours, so great in energy and in splendour"—he looked round at the marble halls of the Hotel Wotan as though they symbolised the grandeur of German industry and art—"is standing on foundations that are rotting and crumbling and cracking beneath us."

"As bad as that?" I asked with incredulity.

"One little push from the French or the British, even one more turn of the screw from fate, and down we go into the great gulf—and Europe will go with us."

"There is a lot of wealth in Germany," I said.

"Paper!" he answered with contempt. "False notes, flung out from the government presses for fools to play with! The German people are fools, because they still think it has some reality. For a little while they can buy real things with it, because the shopkeepers are fools, too, and think it has some kind of value. But even the people who get it find its reality disappears between their fingers like snow on which the sun shines. Even they have learned not to keep it long. A thousand marks to-day may be worth no more than five hundred the day after to-morrow. So people who catch the paper money while it flies spend quickly. Good old German thrift has gone to the devil. 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!' That's the motto even for good, honest, middle-class folk—and it's right enough. To-morrow Germany will die as an industrial nation, unless the world forgets its hate and comes to her rescue. And if Germany dies, Europe dies."

"Whose fault?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders in that quick, vivacious way he had.

"The Allies pressed us too hard," he said. "France kicked us when we were down, I agree. But the German Government is mostly to blame. Just as our generals played the gambler's game to the last throw in the war, so our politicians now are gambling with the fate of the nation in this peace, with faked-paper printing presses working overtime, the exploitation of a people's industry by sham wages. You see, I tell you the truth, as one soldier to another."

"What's going to happen?" I asked.

"This winter there will be riots in Berlin and many other cities."

"Some of these people will get a fright," I said.

He laughed for a moment, and then was gloomy again. He was moving away when something startled him, as it did me. The band had just finished playing one of Leo Fall's waltzes, and in the silence that followed—a relative silence, with the chatter of many voices in many tongues and the clatter of plates and glasses as the waiters did their work—

there came the sound of a little piping tune on a tin whistle. I recognised this sound instantly. It was the tune which the strange young beggar had played to me in Wilhelmstrasse, as though he and I were alone in a German wood.

I looked across the tables where the Valuta hogs were dining, and saw his figure standing between two marble pillars through which one had to pass from the great entrance hall to this dining room. He was in the same queer costume, with his brown linen shirt open at the neck, and his white cotton drawers above his brown legs. His long hedge stick was stuck through the curve of his elbow like a shepherd's crook, as he held his tin whistle in both hands and played his tune. It was as though a Greek boy had come straying out of old Hellas to this hotel of modern luxury and rich vulgarity; or, rather, as I thought again, as though young John the Baptist were in this house of publicans. Moving slowly, with a little smile on his face, he came down the centre line of tables until he reached the middle of the immense room, and all the time he played his little lilting tune.

Many of the guests stared at him with surprise, but as though he might have been engaged by the management as some special turn, like the Russian gipsies who sang each night at the Monico in the Kurfürstendam. But it was clear to me at a glance that the waiters were astounded, and even, I thought, a little frightened. They stopped carrying plates or taking orders, and some of them whispered together, glancing at their strange guest with apprehension.

He finished his tune and then leaned on his tall stick, looking very gravely and watchfully at the faces of the people about him. Then he began to speak in German, in that pleasant musical voice which I had heard over my shoulder in the Wilhelmstrasse when he asked me for five marks for the love of God. He spoke with a kind of pity, it seemed.

"You are rich people here," he said, "but you are all most evil to see. If you could see yourselves as I think God must see you, you would be frightened at your own ugliness. You are as ugly as sin, because you are that. You are like beasts wallowing at the trough; strange pampered beasts in human

clothes, bedecked with jewels and fine linen. I was like you once, before I saw my own ugliness in the mirror of God's beauty. Because I was like you, I understand and am sorry for you. I understand the ignorance which makes you greedy and cruel and careless of the world of suffering about you which you have helped to make. I think God will not blame you, because He understands. But it is certain that unless you cleanse yourselves, and put cruelty out of your hearts, and learn the joy of love and beauty and suffering and sacrifice, there will be great torment for you. Because all the things in which you take delight are doomed. This money for which you have sold your souls, will melt away in your coffers. To-day you eat too much, but in a little while you will starve. Even those diamonds which flash on your fat fingers will be worth no more than flints to buy the needs of your bodies, for one cannot get bread out of stones. This Europe of ours, which is your playground, is dying of corruption and disease. There is no health in it, because such as you have poisoned it, as you are poisoned. It is poisoned with hate and lies and greed, and its body dies because its soul is dead. I have come to tell you of these things, and to save you, if I can, from the wrath of those who are hungry while you eat too much. And now I play you again a little tune that was made when there was love in the world."

He put his tin whistle to his lips and played the quaintest, merriest little melody, which seemed to me, perhaps to others, like the patter of dancing feet in some old German town away back in fairy-tale time, before there was ever poison gas or the whirl of a bomb-laden Gotha. Then slowly he went towards the entrance hall and disappeared behind the pillars.

The effect of this appearance and speech on the people dining in the Hotel Wotan was curious to me. Even to the end, quite a number of them were clearly convinced that this was a new kind of turn for their entertainment. It was intended to be funny, they thought, and they smiled and nodded to each other and wagged their heads as though here was a great jest and some deep irony which they did not altogether understand, but which, no doubt, was the latest thing in Berlin. Others were dumbfounded, and, having been

stricken into silence for a time, presently began to murmur angrily. A fat little man at the next table to mine became purple in the face, and demanded to know why the police allowed a scoundrel like that to invade the best hotel in Berlin and grossly insult the guests.

My little waiter, the German lieutenant, came with my coffee, and uttered the word "*Ausserordentlich!*" with an air of consternation mingled with amusement.

"Who is this Hans von Menzel?" I asked.

He was surprised that I knew the man's name, until I told him of my encounter.

"His father was Graf von Menzel—you remember?—the great financier who was ruined by the war and shot himself in the Deutsche Bank. It made a great stir at the time. He was the biggest gambler on the stock market, and one of the biggest scoundrels in Germany."

"But this young man—is he mad?"

"Was Christ mad?" asked the German waiter.

He did not wait for an answer to that question, but told me some details about the son of the great financier. Before the war he had been notorious in the fast life of Berlin. Having great artistic talent, most of his associates were young artists of the advanced school—futurists, vorticists, all those queer freaks, said my little waiter, who upset the laws of perspective, painted pictures upside down and inside out, put women's noses under their elbows and men's eyes in their beards, and seemed to find some exquisite joy in masses of violent colour and patterns of meaningless lines.

Hans von Menzel had had a house in the Kurfürstendam decorated in that fashion, an absolute madhouse, from all accounts, and there he indulged in orgies which were the scandal of Berlin. A wonderfully handsome youth, he was adored by women, and there had been much talk about his entanglement with the Russian dancer, Kakoshka.

Then the war came. It seemed to change him utterly. With the Second Prussian Guards he had been wonderfully brave. He won the Iron Cross before it had become cheap, and was three times wounded in Flanders and once afterwards at Verdun. Towards the end of the war something

changed him again. He was put under arrest for preaching pacifism to the troops. After the war and his father's suicide he abandoned everything, lived like a tramp and a beggar, and wandered about, as I had seen him, playing his tin whistle, telling fairy tales to children, talking about love and peace to peasants and poor people, the night birds of Berlin and the criminal classes of the East End.

"A case of shell shock," I suggested.

The little German waiter shrugged his shoulders in his characteristic way.

"Soul shock, if you like! I don't understand these things. But this Hans von Menzel is not without followers. A saint, people call him in the working quarters. The children follow him like the Pied Piper of Hamelin—and more than children. Have you seen those young people about in Berlin and the countryside, showing their necks and arms and legs, all sunburned, and carrying little packs on their backs?"

Yes, I had seen them, and wondered at them. They were mostly boys and girls of any age from eighteen to twenty-two, I guessed. They wandered among the Berlin crowds like people starting for a walking tour.

"They are following the gospel of Hans von Menzel," said my waiter. "It's a new cult—the abandonment of civilisation, poverty and nature, peace and beauty, beggars for the love of God, a denial of all that built up German pride and power before the war. They seek to replace love in the world. In my opinion"—the little waiter glanced round the room at the people he despised and hated—"it can't be done at this period of the world's history."

He laughed as though he had found some jest in those words, and went away to make out my bill.

It was partly by coincidence, yet not wholly, that I came in touch with people in Berlin who knew Hans von Menzel with more intimate knowledge than the waiter at the Hotel Wotan, and that afterwards I had the chance of knowing him myself. . . . It was a coincidence that on the night after his appearance at the hotel I saw the name Kakoshka printed large on a playroll in the Potsdamerplatz. That name did not link itself in my mind at first with the man who had made himself a

beggar, and it was only later that I remembered that it had been mentioned in the waiter's life story of Hans von Menzel. What it recalled to me was a dainty little lady who had been my table companion on board the *Olympic*, sailing from New York. Enormous bouquets of flowers had been carried on board for her, and before the ship left the landing stage a platoon of photographers and movie men had surrounded her on the upper deck—a sure sign that she had made good in the United States and was leaving after a triumphal time.

At the purser's table I had long talks with her about the art of dancing and the beauty of rhythm and the Russian revolution and Bolshevism, which she hated with a kind of anguish of hate, and American characteristics, and, of course, the inevitable subject of prohibition, which at that time could not be avoided by any visitor to the United States. She had not been spoiled, I thought, by adulation and success, though I knew nothing of her private life or her love affairs, which I was told had been many and varied. To me, anyhow, she was simple and frank, not hiding her peasant origin—she had been born in the village of Lubimovka, somewhere on the Volga, and had tended her father's sheep as a child—or seeming to notice the curiosity and homage, as far as men's eyes roved, which she aroused among the first-class passengers. She was too small to be beautiful, I thought; but remarkably pretty, like a little shepherdess in Dresden china, and enormously alive, like some fairy creature, sensitive to every breath of wind and every glint of sunshine, and ready for instant flight.

Kakoshka. The name stared at me from the hoarding in the Potsdamerplatz, and I saw that she was dancing at the Monico, where the Russian gipsies were singing. I took a taxi to the place, lured by the thought of seeing her again, and it was only then, on the way, that I remembered the words spoken about Hans von Menzel by the waiter at the Wotan—"There had been much talk about his entanglement with the Russian dancer, Kakoshka." Perhaps if I could speak to her she would tell me more about that remarkable young man.

The Monico restaurant was already crowded when I arrived

there at a few minutes after ten. The cloakroom attendant, a bearded man with sinister eyes, remarkably like Lenin, the Bolshevik dictator, told me civilly that I had better get my seat quickly or there would be no room left. Most of the people were finishing dinner at small tables crowded with the *débris* of their meals and with bottles of wine, empty or half filled. The atmosphere was of the end-of-the-meal variety, thick with tobacco smoke and the fumes of wine, and the greasy odours of cooked food. Yet the company was more agreeable, I thought, than that of the Wotan, and the place more amusing.

The people here were mostly Russians, with a sprinkling of young Germans of the professional and intellectual class—artists and literary men, I should say, by the look of them—and two or three parties of American journalists whom I happened to know. It was with a little American group that I took my seat; and one of them, young Wendell, was surprised at my ignorance of a place which, he said, was one of the brightest dives in Berlin.

"You're just in time to see Kakoshka," he told me. "She's great! She comes on after the Russian gipsies have done their first stunt."

A little fat man was leading a stringed orchestra with a tiny concertina, or accordion, which he played in and out among the tables with astonishing genius and emotion, so that he made it sound like a church organ.

For a few minutes he seemed to make love with it to a very handsome young woman dining with an elderly cavalier, and she gave him her hand to kiss as a reward for his efforts.

"That's Princess Bourishkine," said young Wendell, who knew everybody. "She escaped from a Bolshevik prison in the uniform of a Red soldier whom she had bribed. That's her portrait on the wall, in the old Russian dress. Pretty good piece of work, don't you think?"

Then he said, "Here come the gips! They sing as though they bathed in vodka—all fire and spirit."

I had seen them before, in Moscow, in the time of famine; and now, in this German restaurant, their strange Oriental songs, the harshness of the women's voices, which has some

thrilling quality to those who hear the ancient East in it, the sharp, quickening rhythm, like horses galloping with a Russian sleigh, the question and answer of songs between the men and women, and those Slav faces, brought back to me memories of strange adventures down the Volga with which this story has nothing to do, except as an introduction to Kakoshka.

That little lady came in after the gipsies had retired. She was dressed like the portrait of Princess Bourishkine, in the old Russian style, with a jewelled crown, and all the guests in the Monico greeted her with enthusiasm, calling out to her in Russian and German. She kissed her hands to them before dancing, and I saw again the grace of those little hands which I had noticed on board the *Olympic* when she was my table companion, and the aliveness of that fairy body of hers, all tingling from head to foot, it seemed, with the vital spark. She danced in the old Russian way, with the most exquisite charm and humour, yet I think her dress did not give her all her chance, and I should have liked her best in simple ballet dress like Columbine.

It was while she was dancing that she recognised me. I saw the surprise in her eyes, and then the nod of greeting.

"She seems to be giving me the glad eye!" said young Wendell, highly flattered.

"No," I said, "I claim that. We're old friends."

"You're old enough to know better," was Wendell's way of revenge.

She beckoned me later to her table, where, after the dance she sat with Princess Bourishkine, to whom she introduced me. Fortunately, after ten minutes, the princess left with her old gentleman, and Kakoshka and I were able to get some private talk, covered by the noise of the orchestra and by a second instalment of gipsy songs.

"Tell me," she said, "what are your adventures since that *Olympic* voyage? Where have you been? Where do you come from?"

"Russia, among other places, since we have met," I told her; and that excited her, and she asked a thousand questions about the state of Russia, and what was happening in

Moscow and Petrograd, and who was left alive among the people she used to know when she was in the Imperial ballet. There were tears in her eyes when I told her some of the things I had seen.

Then presently she asked me about my business in Berlin, and laughed when I told her I was there to study the human nature of Germans after the war, and to try to solve the riddle of their mentality, upon which future peace or war would certainly depend.

"Have you found any revelation?" she asked with a smile. "Have you met any new prophet of *Kultur*?"

"I'm on the track of one," I answered lightly. "Anyhow, he has the appearance of a prophet, like John the Baptist. He is called Hans von Menzel."

She was greatly startled and distressed by my mention of that name. Her face became extremely pale, and then was swept by a warm flush of colour.

She sat quite still for a few moments, staring into my eyes but not seeing me, I think, because her thoughts were busy with some emotional history of her past life.

"I knew that man once," she said presently; "he was my lover. I dare say you have been told that in Berlin?"

"Only once, and that vaguely," I answered. "Forgive me for speaking of him."

She told me that she was glad I spoke of him. She had heard of his strange life, but had never seen him since the war and her visit to America. He had sent her a message which had frightened her, but she had never answered it. Did I think he was mad?

"Madness is difficult to define," I said, and she nodded in agreement when I added that by the modern code of life he seemed quite mad, though in earlier times men like Francis of Assisi and other saints had embraced poverty and beggary in just that way for their soul's sake.

"In Russia," said Kakoshka, "it was a kind of fashion before the revolution, among young men of noble families. They went back to peasant life and found some joy in its misery. Strange! I escaped from that life and look back on it with terror. The dirt of poverty is so terrible and its

ugliness so enslaving. Now I need the beauty that only wealth can bring. Perhaps I have lost my soul as the devil's price for that. It is what Hans said in his message to me."

"There's virtue in beauty," I said, to comfort her a little, for she was still visibly distressed. "Your grace is a gift to life."

She smiled at me and shook her head.

"Virtue and I are not joined in holy matrimony. I am a dancing girl. It would be better if I were starving with my peasant folk in the village of Lubimovka on the Volga—more honest."

She was immensely sad while she spoke those words, and yet in her volatile way she changed a second afterwards and laughed with a kind of bitterness.

"I do not quarrel with my way of life. And Hans von Menzel is mad—incurably mad, poor boy!"

She put her hand on mine and spoke in a kind of whisper.

"All the same, I want to see him once again. He was my lover, you understand? And I loved his love and his beauty of youth and his sulkiness. When he went to the war I forgot him—I have no loyalty. But now I want to see him again. You will tell him so?"

"I don't know him," I said.

"You will take a message from me," she answered, with a touch of command in her voice.

"What message?"

She thought for a moment and said: "'Kakoshka searches for the meaning of eternal love. Only you can teach her that.' Tell him this and bring him to my garden on Wannsee. You promise?"

"If I see him again I will give him your message."

She gave me some details of how to find her garden on the lake, and that was all the conversation we had.

A tall, shaven-headed German, who, young Wendell told me afterwards, was a notorious *Schieber*, or war profiteer, enormously rich, came over to kiss her hand. Other people, impatient of my monopoly, spoiled my chance of private talk. Presently she danced again, and then left the Monico with a

party of Russians and the tall German, with a wave of the hand to me.

I had told Kakoshka that I was in Berlin to study the human nature of Germans after the war, and to try to solve the riddle of their mentality. That was true, and for a week or two I pursued my inquiries earnestly enough, with only an occasional thought of the little Russian lady and her former lover, Hans von Menzel.

Berlin and all Germany were in a state of panic at that time, waiting the decision of the Reparations Commission on the subject of a moratorium for their debts to the Allies, and expecting France to take new and drastic measures to enforce payment by a control of mines and forests. There was a general belief that such action would bring Germany down with a crash, and the communication of this terror—for it amounted to that—led to a wild selling of marks in New York and London and all the exchanges of the world, so that they fell as low as eleven thousand to the English pound. Yet undoubtedly the main cause of this financial disaster was the reason given by my friendly waiter in the Hotel Wotan—the mad output of paper money from the Government printing presses, followed by the instant raising of wages and prices and new issues of notes to keep pace with them, in a vicious circle that had become wild and whirling.

Now, prices were soaring above all competition with wages, and the Government was faced with the frightful possibility that the false paper money could no longer buy the grain needed from abroad to feed the people, or the coal to keep them warm in the coming winter, or the wool to clothe them.

Some riots had happened already in the poorer suburbs of Berlin, the people were smashing up the markets because of the price of butter and cheese, and I heard many prophecies from many people in different classes that unless Germany obtained an international loan to bolster up her rotten financial state there would be widespread trouble in the coming winter.

This is dull stuff to thrust into the story I am telling, yet one must understand that state of things in Berlin in order to see how it was reflected in the extraordinary character of

that young man, Hans von Menzel, and the new cult of which he was, to some extent, the prophet. I can see now that his madness, if one can call it that, was a direct outcome of the state of Germany, brought to the ruin of her pride and power by forces of evil and corruption in the soul of the nation, as all Europe, indeed, was menaced by the same forces of destruction and decay from the same causes. Knowing in his body and soul what kind of war had been made by hate, this young man set out to preach love in a kind of sacrificial way. Beholding the failure and dishonesty of all that financial system upon which German civilisation had been based, brought home to him, no doubt, by his father's life and death, and the disease which had now overtaken it, he had become a preacher of poverty, and found a strange sweetness and purity in hunger and nakedness and beggary. He stood, madly, no doubt, against all those forces of reaction and militarism—goose-steppings and parades at Munich, secret organisations of ex-officers, propaganda for the next war against France—which I found existing still in certain classes of German mentality.

That, anyhow, is how I read the riddle of this young man, whom I have called the Beggar of Berlin, when I met him and had talk with him in a place called Pfaueninsel, meaning Peacocks' Island, on the lakes outside Berlin known as the Wannsee.

That is a favourite spot of holiday makers who can escape from the summer heat of Berlin, and wonderfully wild and free, though only an hour or less from the city. The chain of lakes reaches out from Potsdam, and is encircled by dark woods, of which the one nearest to Berlin is the beautiful Grönewald, larger than Windsor Forest, perhaps, though not so splendid in ancient trees.

It was on a Saturday afternoon that I went to Wannsee by train from the Potsdamer Bahnhof and to the Pfaueninsel—Peacocks' Island—by boat.

The white steamer was crowded with small boys and girls belonging, perhaps, to some big school or group of schools, poorly dressed, but spotlessly clean, as all German children are; and to my eyes, no longer blinded by war passion—to

tell the truth, I was never much blinded, having been too close to the fighting front—they looked like fairy-book children of whom I used to read in Grimm's tales—was it a thousand years ago?—such as Hansel and Gretel, and Little Red Riding Hood, and the princes and princesses of my childhood's dreams.

Here they were in the flesh, with their blue eyes and their straw-coloured hair, and the beauty of innocence and grace in them. They munched little slices of bread and rosy-cheeked apples from secret stores in their satchels, and went dancing and singing off the boat at the landing stage of Peacocks' Island, where other crowds of children had already gathered. Here they went wandering into the woods, or to the lawns where the famous peacocks strutted, showing the majesty of their tails, where the little ones joined hands and played singing games, watched by their mothers and teachers. A pleasant sight, which I left for a while to have tea in a woodland chalet.

It was after that, as the afternoon shadows were lengthening over the lawns, that I heard a little tune being played on a tin whistle somewhere beneath the trees.

I followed the sound of it, which was now familiar to me, and presently found that strange musician, Count Hans von Menzel, sitting under an oak tree, piping to a crowd of children who sat in a ring around him.

As a reward for his tune he asked for a piece of bread. Instantly scores of little hands fumbled in their haversacks and then held out slices of bread, while shrill cries rang out of "*Nehmen Sie diesses!*" "Take this one!"

He chose his piece from the smallest of the boys; and then, while he munched it, he told the children an old fairy tale which kept them spellbound. I only heard the last words he spoke.

"So you see," he said, "that the fairies do not like men and women who quarrel with each other, and they keep all their gifts for those who love their neighbours. The fairies tell me that is true in all parts of the world to-day. Our poor Germany is nearly ruined because we hated our neighbours and they hated us. Unless we kill hatred in our hearts, like

the boy who killed the dragon, we shall all be plagued like those poor folk in my tale."

"I shall always hate the French," said a small boy.

"And I shall always hate the English," said another.

"When I grow up, I want to be a soldier like my father, and take revenge upon our enemies," said the third boy who spoke.

A shadow seemed to pass over the face of Hans von Menzel, though he sat where the sunlight fell through the leaves upon him.

"Then the good fairies will die in Germany and leave our dreadful world," he said.

"Play to us again!" shouted the children, but he shook his head sadly and said: "You have made me forget my best tunes to-day. But I thank you for your piece of bread, little mice. To-morrow I will play again to you, when my tunes come back."

"But we shall not be here to-morrow!" said a little girl.

"No; that is true," he said. "We shall none of us be here to-morrow. How sad that is! Then I must play to you now my little tune that puts love in the heart if you listen very quietly."

It was a sweet, sad thing he played on his tin whistle, and then it changed quickly to a dance, and all the little ones sprang up and took hands and went whirling round. After that the young man kissed his hand to them and went away into the wood, where I followed him. We came face to face in a glade where he stood leaning on his stick and staring at some little white flowers in the thin grass.

"Good day," I said, and at this greeting he looked up at me and smiled in a friendly way.

"Good day, brother. I think we met in the great city? This quiet wood is better. Do you care to sit and talk?"

He sat down on the bank, with his long stick between his knees, and made a courteous gesture for me to sit beside him. Although he dressed like a beggar, he had a fine manner.

He talked perfectly sanely, and spoke to me at first about England, his mother's country, which he had known well

before the war. He loved the old cathedral towns, especially Canterbury and York, and thought the pleasantest places on earth were the English gardens he had known. Then he referred to the war, and said the Germans and English should never have fought each other. It was the greatest crime in history, he thought.

"Not our crime," I said; "we did not desire the war."

"True," he said. "Your people were innocent. But not your politicians and those who controlled your foreign policy and your world markets. Our military caste—to which I belonged for a time—were the direct agents of the war, poor crazy men! But all Europe was an armed camp, divided into hostile groups for the protection of wealth, in deadly rivalry. England is not so guiltless as she thinks. Her statesmen supported this system and knew the risks of it to their people, and did not tell them. . . . But in this wood there are better things to talk about. How delightful is the scent of the pine needles!"

After that we spoke of books, and especially of Shakespeare, whose works he knew by heart, I think.

"I am like the melancholy Jaques," he said, "making a moral of life under the greenwood tree. Perhaps also like the fool i' the forest whom he found so 'deep-contemplative.'"

"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please; for so fools have;
And they that are most galled with my folly,
They most must laugh——"

"Why do you live like this?" I asked. "Surely there is better work for you to do than a beggar's job!"

He laughed, and then was thoughtful, and poked his stick into the ground and stared at it.

"You think I'm mad," he said, "as most people do. But there is a method in my madness. I want to save my people, and myself first. The only way is the old way, a simple faith in God and in the beauty of His works in this good earth. There is no other way of salvation, and it is not to be found in wealth and industrial power, but in poverty and humility. The German people are going to be poor. I think

all European people are going to be poor, because the death of the industrial era has been declared, and the cities will perish—as they deserve. I want to teach our people how to be poor bravely; how to regain their spiritual wealth when they are ruined; how to possess all things when they have nothing. It's an old creed, not my own. But for that I have become a beggar, sleeping in the woods at night, or wandering homeless in the streets of Berlin, dependent for my life on casual charity. But not lazy! Everywhere I tell old tales and play old tunes which have this message in them. I mean the message of love and childlike faith. Here and there, in a street or a glade, I may drop a seed in some young heart which will grow big with the power of the spirit when I have passed away. That is my madness, and it is a flame in me."

"There were saints who were mad like that," I said, and at that he coloured deeply, and told me he was no saint, but rotten with the evil he had done in the world.

It was at the end of a silence that fell upon us both that I said, "I have a message for you—from a friend in your former life."

"Does any one of them remember me with friendship?" he asked. "Who is that?"

"Kakoshka," I told him.

At that name he started violently and became as pale as she had done when I had spoken his name to her.

"I have forgotten that name," he said harshly. "It has passed out of mind and heart, by God's grace."

"I promised to deliver her message," I persisted.

"I won't hear it," he said stubbornly.

But I told him the message.

"'Kakoshka searches for the meaning of eternal love. Only you can teach her that.'"

He was profoundly disturbed, and sat there, thrusting his stick into the loose earth with a kind of anger and anguish.

"It's a trick," he said presently, in a low voice. "She sets a trap before my feet. That woman wants to lure me back to my old way of life. I know her treachery, the lie in her soul."

"I'm not so sure," I told him. "She remembers your love as the great joy of her life."

"Our love?" he said. "Oh, God!"

He laughed with a kind of harsh irony.

"She has some honesty," I protested; "the simplicity of a peasant girl, in spite of her life of luxury."

"It's her pose," he said bitterly. "She would lure a saint to hell with her child eyes."

"Anyhow, she's not happy," I told him, and I repeated those words she spoke to me: "'It would be better if I were starving with my peasant folk in the village of Lubimovka.'"

Those words startled him.

"Did she say that?" he asked. "If so, it was true. It would be better for her a thousand times. You are sure those were her words?"

"The very words she used."

"If I could help her"—he said, and then broke off his sentence and cried out, "No! I dare not let her speak to me! She's a liar in her very soul!"

"I know her less than you," I said, "but I think better of her."

I wonder, even now, why I argued with him on behalf of Kakoshka. She was nothing to me, nothing more than the pleasant memory of an Atlantic voyage and a little picture of dancing grace. Yet by some trick of mentality I made myself a pleader for her with Hans von Menzel. Perhaps it was to test his strength and to probe his weakness, as a study of human nature, which to me is a problem of inexhaustible interest. Perhaps some deeper subconscious motive which I do not understand impelled me to bring these two people face to face again.

"She has a garden sloping down to the Wannsee," I said. "In a boat I could row you there in twenty minutes. Perhaps some word from you would be like a light to her. It might be worth your while to speak that word."

"No," he said; "no, I've been well rid of her."

He walked away into the woods without a farewell to me, and I went back to the landing stage to wait for the next steamer back to Wannsee. I should never see a meeting

between Hans von Menzel and Kakoshka, but I had delivered the message and so had fulfilled my promise.

Ten minutes later he stood by my side.

"Take me to her garden," he said. "It's God's will, I think."

Kakoshka had told me where her garden lay. It sloped down from her house on the eastern side of the yacht club which could be seen from the Wannsee landing stage. I hired a boat and rowed, while Hans von Menzel held the rudder lines. Only once I spoke to him on the way.

"It is, after all, none of my business," I said. "I'm only a messenger."

"*Bestimmt*," he said, meaning that he agreed to that, and using the only German word which he spoke during our whole conversation that afternoon.

I pulled the boat alongside a private landing stage at which a little motor launch was moored. I was sure of the place, because the launch had the name of Lubimovka. It was Kakoshka's Russian village, far away on the Volga, a very world away from her present life.

It was now late in the afternoon, and the sunlight was very golden and glamorous in that lakeside garden and all around. Beyond a fringe of willows was a sloping lawn as smooth as velvet, with a border of flower beds of rich colour. Not far away from the water's edge was a little white summer house, and near it was a hammock swung low between two silver firs. At the sound of the splash of my oars and the boat gliding among the reeds the hammock swayed, and a little figure in a white frock stood suddenly between the trees, looking towards us. For a few moments she stood quite motionless, and then came down the sloping lawn to the water's edge with a cry of "Hans!"

He stepped out of the boat and stood on the edge of the lawn before her, but not looking at her. He bent his head as he leaned on his tall stick and spoke to her in German:

"You sent me a message, and I have come against my will. What is it you have to say to me?"

She said, "There are a thousand things to say between you and me."

"Not of the past," he told her. "That is dead in my mind. I am no longer what I was then, but a different man. You see this dress of mine? It's a beggar's way of dress. I'm a wandering tramp. What do you want with me?"

"I want you to tell me the truth," she said; "the truth about this life and the death that follows."

For a moment he was silent, and I think it was for the first time he looked at her.

"The truth," he said slowly, "will hurt you as though I should tear your heart out or the beauty from your bones. Have you the courage to hear that from me?"

"I have asked for the truth," said Kakoshka, "and I have courage, as you know."

She said she had courage, but she was white to the lips, and was, I am certain, afraid of this man who once had loved her.

She moved away from him to the summer house, and he followed her at some sign she gave, and went inside with her.

It must have been an hour before Hans von Menzel came out again. I could hear the murmur of their voices, but not a word they said. Once it sounded to me as though one of them were weeping, and it was not Kakoshka, but a man's agony. Several times the woman's voice rose high and shrill, as though she were speaking passionately.

More than once there was a long silence between them. Then, at the end, Kakoshka laughed, and it was not a pleasant sound of laughter, but rather cruel, I thought, with mockery. Whether she mocked at him or at herself I do not know, and shall never know.

He came out of the summer house alone, and his face had the look of a man escaped from a torture chamber. He strode swiftly across the lawn, pushed his way through the overhanging willows, and, getting into the boat, said, "Take me back," as though I were his hired man.

At the Wannsee landing stage he turned to me with a look of deep melancholy.

"I have smashed a butterfly," he said, "and it was a cruel thing, even for God's sake."

Then, with a gesture of farewell, he walked towards the darkening woods.

That was the last I saw of the Beggar of Berlin, as I have called him. My visit to Germany ended abruptly, and it was in England that I heard the latest news of him. That was from young Wendell, the American journalist, whom I happened to meet some weeks ago in the grill room of the Savoy.

"How's Germany?" I asked, and he told me that there had been an epidemic of food riots, some of which had led to bloodshed.

"The government printing presses had made marks drop down like autumn leaves," he said. "A fatal policy, as any fool could see."

Then suddenly, in his account of things, he mentioned the name of Hans von Menzel.

"I guess you never heard of that guy. Perfectly mad, in my opinion. Dressed like a beggar, and lived like one, but with a queer hold over the people. They say he's the only man in Germany who can keep the masses quiet and prevent the hoisting of the red flag. He preaches some new form of brotherly love, or the same old bunk. Anyhow, the Government fears him, and chases him; one of those freaks that are thrown up in times of chaos. Well, here's to good business!"

"What's happened to that little dancer?" I asked. "Do you remember?—Kakoshka—that night at the Monico."

"Why, that's another story," he said. "She had the world at her feet in the dancing line. German profiteers lined up to kiss her hands. She could have her pick of them. What do you think she did?"

"Couldn't give a guess," I told him.

"No; it isn't easy. Well, I'll tell you. She went back to Russia and nursed typhus-stricken babies on the Volga. Needless to say, she caught the plague and died of it. As pretty a kid as ever I saw, and the jolliest little dancer—like a butterfly in the sunshine."

It was strange that he should have used that image. I remembered the words of Hans von Menzel—"I have smashed a butterfly, and it was a cruel thing, even for God's sake."

Perhaps all the time Kakoshka knew that her fate was with her peasant folk in Lubimovka.

IV: A BARGAIN IN THE KREMLIN

IT is two years now since the Russian violinist, Anton Balakireff, became the idol of the music-loving world in London for one brief season, after his first appearance at the Queen's Hall. I suppose most people remember the newspaper accounts of the ovations he received, the storming of the platform by English as well as Russian women, who kissed his hands—with their broken finger nails—while he stood there, shy, sulky, almost sullen, with a lock of black hair flopping over his broad forehead, and a queer, moody smile in his rather deep-sunken eyes.

"An astonishing performer," said the critics, marvellously unanimous for once. "A genius in technique," wrote one of them. "Surely inspired in his own compositions by that wild, tragic, haunting music which is in the very soul of the Slav race."

Well, I don't know much about that, not being a musical critic; but I happen to know—as few do—why this young man came to England from Moscow, and the terms of his contract for that season at the Queen's Hall.

The story is worth telling, because it reveals something of the life of Russia under the Soviet Republic. Also it is the story of the secret agony suffered by this man when he was being fêted and hero-worshipped by Russian and English society in London; an agony of temptation which made a coward of him, as I fancy it would have tempted most men, however brave, to cowardice, and perhaps to dishonour.

He told me the whole thing himself, with permission to write it for him as an explanation of his abominable rudeness at times to English friends.

I doubt whether any but a Russian could have been so frank in self-analysis, so deeply interested in his own emotions under stress of fear, racial love and passion for the

one woman who meant more to him than music—meant music to him, perhaps.

He played first violin in the Moscow Opera House, and occasional pieces of his own, by permission of the Soviet Committee, at Sunday concerts to school children, trade unionists and others. His reputation as a violinist had saved his life at the time of the terror, when he was arrested with hundreds of other young men and brought before the cheka—the extraordinary commission—on a charge of conspiring against the Soviet Republic.

As a matter of fact, he was at that time, he tells me, utterly innocent of any political act. Intellectually he had favoured the Kerensky revolution and the overthrow of Tsardom, like most young men of liberal ideas in Russia, but while this history was happening he had remained a student of music, shutting out the cruelties of life as far as possible by writing an opera in the bed-sitting-room of an apartment house in the Sophie-skaya, where he had gone to live after the escape of his father and mother from Russia, soon after the peace of Brest-Litovski.

"Why didn't you go with them?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders and gave me reasons which I thought ridiculous.

"I didn't want to smash my violin in overcrowded trains; and I detested my father, who had never been sympathetic to my fiddler's life and free ideas. He was a cavalry general, you understand."

As the son of General Balakireff, who had commanded the Tsar's Imperial Hussars, this young man—twenty-five when Lenin became president of the Soviet Central Committee—had a precious poor chance of life in the days of terror. From his prison men of less notable family, ex-officers, ordinary students, clerks and merchants, or sons of merchants, were taken out in batches, or singly, and shot for no other crime than that of belonging to the hated *bourgeoisie*. Some of them, it is true, had been involved in counter-revolutionary plots; and others, like most Russians at that time, were politicians with wild theories of freedom and self-government which were not in agreement with Lenin's new

system of despotism. But it made very little difference what their views had been. The examining committee of the extraordinary commission—commonly called the cheka—mostly made up of fanatical young communists animated by fear of counter-revolution and by a blind hatred of anybody tainted with the social influence of the old *régime*, were regardless of evidence and ruthless of human life, at least during that worst period of the terror.

Anton's description of his prison days made my flesh creep. He spared me no details of horror—the lack of sanitary arrangements in his room, where fifty of his fellow prisoners were herded, the agony of those who became stricken with typhus, the despair and delirium which seized those who were terror-stricken by the prospect of being shot like dogs against the red brick wall in the courtyard outside, the religious mania of one man who shrieked at devilish apparitions, the blasphemies of others, the tears of boys younger than Anton, the careless courage of a few who defied death itself with a shrug of the shoulders and scornful words. Terrible!

Anton was sent for at night by the cheka. He tells me that when that summons came fear seized him in so strong a clutch that he could hardly rise from the boards where he had been lying asleep, and his legs seemed paralysed.

One of the red soldiers hit him a blow with the butt end of his rifle, and that angered him so that he was less frightened, and regained the use of his limbs.

"Rage is a good cure for fear," he told me.

One of the prisoners, an elderly man, who had been Professor of Zoology in the University of Moscow, embraced him and kissed him on both cheeks.

"*Dos vidanya!*" he said, meaning "*Au revoir!*" "As a musician you ought to have no fear of death, little brother. On the other side there will be eternal music."

Anton had his violin in the prison, which he sometimes played to his fellow prisoners by permission of his jailers, who grinned and tapped the stone floor with heel and toe when he played little old dance tunes. He grabbed it now and carried it under his arm with his bow, and the two

guards who were taking him before the cheka did not forbid him. It was his idea to ask one plea of his executioners—to let him hold this old fiddle of his when he stood before the firing party. It would give him more courage to face death, he thought.

“Courage is mostly pride,” he told me, when he described the episode. “I’ve seen a fellow put on a medal to be shot. And others have brushed their clothes and combed their hair. One poor fool killed fear a little by reciting a sonnet he had written—the most miserable trash! It gave him a sense of superiority to the louts who killed him.”

The examining committee of the cheka were in a big room which had once been the conference room of an insurance office, with polished desks and tables—not at all the sort of place one might expect as the headquarters of the Russian terror.

There were about eight young men seated at a long table, smoking cigarettes and whispering to each other. The president of the committee was a more elderly man—though only middle-aged—with a broad, flat face, fringed by a reddish beard, and gold-rimmed spectacles. It was a man named Radeff, commonly called Redbeard, and famous afterwards as chief of revolutionary propaganda in foreign countries.

He spoke first, after a glance at Anton Balakireff, standing between the two red soldiers, with his violin under his arm, his black hair all tousled, his face and hands dirty after three weeks in prison without means of washing, and his clothes covered with the dust from the prison floor boards.

“Who is this young man?” asked Radeff in a voice that was not unkindly.

One of the young men read out his name.

“Anton Balakireff, son of Boris Balakireff, one time general of imperial cavalry and notorious leader of counter-revolution in enemy countries.”

“We are trying the son, not the father,” said Radeff, with a chuckle as though he spoke a jest.

One of the committee answered him.

“The son has his father’s blood, poisoned with the vice of the old *bourgeoisie*.”

"That's true," answered the man with the red beard. "Bad blood, certainly! Any evidence against this young man?"

One of the committee wetted a dirty forefinger and turned over some typewritten sheets.

Anton told me that the sound of those sheets being turned over seemed to change his blood to water, though he cannot understand the reason for that psychological effect. He thinks his terror was associated, perhaps, with his school days, when he used to stand before the headmaster of the high school in Kazan while his weeks' reports were being read.

There was nothing much against him in this secret *dossier*. It gave the details of his parentage, educational career, musical distinctions, and enumerated several of his friends, some of whom had already been shot for counter-revolutionary acts or opinions.

"A bad record," said one member of the committee. He was a young man of the mechanic class, it seemed, and his hands were still begrimed as though by the toil he had now abandoned for the work of terror. "We've heard enough. Why waste time?"

The other men nodded, and one drew forward a printed sheet which Anton guessed was the order for execution. Obviously his two guards thought so, for they straightened themselves up as though making ready to march him out.

The man named Radeff held up a plump white hand and smiled through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"One moment, comrades. I have an amusing idea about this young man. It appears from his record that he won the highest prize for the violin at the Moscow Academy of Music. I confess that softens me towards him. As an amateur——"

He made a comical gesture, as though drawing a bow over a violin, and then laughed loudly.

The three young men smiled, but the other members of the committee remained grim and sullen, and one of them said, "We waste time."

"No," said Radeff; "I am thinking of our comrade Rosen-

dorff. He is organising the orchestra of the opera which he proposes to re-open in order to give the proletariat the advantages of music that were formerly enjoyed by the capitalist classes. An admirable idea. I approve of it most heartily. It occurs to me this young man might be useful in the orchestra—if he can really play. Of course, if he can't——”

He made a gesture as though raising a rifle to his shoulder, and then laughed again, and beamed at the committee through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

The three young men whispered together and looked at Anton, who had not been asked to speak a single word hitherto, but stood there white and terror-stricken between the two red soldiers.

“Play something,” said one of them. “You have heard what our comrade has said? It’s a chance for you, perhaps. Soviet Russia wishes to encourage the arts.”

“Yes,” said the red-bearded man unctuously. “We’re not in revolt against beauty, young man. On the contrary, we will demonstrate to capitalist countries that the noblest art is born from the soul of a free communistic people. Play!”

He lit a cigarette and sat back in his chair as though preparing to enjoy himself with an amusing and agreeable interlude in the more serious business of the extraordinary commission.

“What shall I play?” asked Anton.

It was the first time he had spoken before his judges, and his voice was weak and hollow.

He told me that in these moments a sense of pride was in conflict with a sense of fear, so that his heart was beating wildly. He would show these fellows that he knew something about the violin! But fear threatened to destroy the power within him, to make him incapable of producing a single note. As he raised the bow it trembled as though he had the palsy.

“As you like,” said Redbeard, as he called Radeff. “I warn you I’m a severe critic.”

A severe critic! The silly imbecile was probably ignorant of the rudiments of music, with no more ear than an old

cow, and less soul than the brass inkpot on the desk in front of him. It was that scorn for his words that gave Anton courage. Pride again, as he said. He drew his bow across the strings with a strong, almost violent stroke, the first note of a piece he had written just before his arrest—a thing he had called Russian History.

It was harsh, ugly stuff at the beginning, with a suggestion of primitive savagery when the early Russians—the Scythians of Greek days—swept into Asia with Darius the Persian on shaggy horses, with wild war cries. That was his idea, though it didn't matter very much, he said, so long as one caught the harshness and brutality of its spirit, and the quick, vital rhythm of it. After that he wove in a fantasy on the early folk songs and dances of his race as he had heard them as a boy in Kazan among the Tartars and the Volga peasants. They, too, were coarse and rough, though with a merry, vulgar lilt to them.

It was when he was playing that part that he saw Redbeard, as he called him, lolling back in his chair, wagging his beard from side to side, and tapping the arm of his chair with his plump fingers.

"Oh-ho, my old fellow!" thought Anton. "So you like it, do you? It calls to your peasant soul. You'd look well in sheepskins, dancing to my tune by the old manure heap."

He was not bothered with fear now. His music had got hold of him, and he had a queer idea that he was putting this Redbeard to the test. All very well to wag his head to that folk stuff. But wait a minute! How about the adagio suggesting the story of Russian serfdom, the misery of a great people hungry, enslaved, scraping a bare life out of the soil, seeing their children die? He had put in a kind of song, a woman's lamentation to her dead baby. Nothing pretty in it; no sickly sentiment; just the raw stuff of the human heart wailing out its agony. There were some frightful notes in it, harsh as hell. What about old Redbeard now?

Well, he seemed to understand. He had his mouth open a little and was breathing through it. There was a kind of pity in his eyes. The others were silent and motionless, but

Anton did not see them. His eyes were fixed on Redbeard. He did some eighteenth-century stuff, hinting at court life, civilisation in ballrooms, silks and satins moving in a minuet. Then he skipped some movements and plunged into war and all its fury. Probably old Redbeard wouldn't understand what he was driving at—all the wild stuff and frenzied bow work—a pyrotechnic display on the fiddle, pretty good as technique, anyhow.

"Then," said Anton, "I forgot old Redbeard and the cheka, and that red wall waiting for me. I played the tragedy of human life—Russia's agony, if you like—of any kind of damned soul crying out to God, who seems deaf. It's the best I've done. That cry of pain rising out of the depths would freeze the blood of a war profiteer. But, of course, it takes a Russian to understand. You English——"

Anyhow, it seemed that Redbeard understood. There were tears in his eyes, trickling down his flabby cheeks. When Anton dropped his bow and stood there trembling in every limb—fear had rushed back after he had played the last note—Redbeard clapped his hands and was strangely excited.

"Prodigious!" he cried in a harsh voice. "This boy plays like a devil or an archangel!"

The three young men nodded and spoke in low tones to one another. They, too, understood music, like all their race. Even the other men looked more human and less like judges. Redbeard whispered to them and Anton heard him speak the name of Rosendorff, the Director of Public Education on the Central Executive Committee. Then he turned to Anton, thrusting his fingers through the hair that fringed his face.

"We're not going to shoot you this time, young man! We'll keep you for better things. How would you like to play in the orchestra at the Soviet opera?"

Anton was speechless. This reprieve was like a miracle. He had great difficulty in keeping from swooning.

One of the young men wrote something on a sheet of paper and handed it to one of the red soldiers.

"This man is free," he said.

One of the cheka offered Anton a cigarette.

"Certainly you play the violin," he said condescendingly.

Redbeard, who had risen from his chair, laid his hand on Anton's shoulder.

"I'm going to keep an eye on you, little comrade! I'll come to hear you when you're first violin at the opera. Now go home and practise like a good boy, and above all avoid politics!" He patted Anton's shoulder again. "That fiddle of yours has saved your life, little brother. Cherish it! Work hard with it! The Soviet Republic will give you full rations in return for your talent. We recognise merit even in the son of an imperial general!"

He laughed heartily, as though at a good jest.

A red soldier touched Anton on the arm. He moistened his lips to speak, but could utter nothing. He bowed and left the room between the two soldiers.

Outside in the corridor was an elderly man between two other guards. As Anton passed him he smiled and said, "Farewell, comrade. In a few minutes I shall join you with God."

"I'm free!" said Anton, and he told me that at that moment to this poor man going before the cheka he felt ashamed, and even sorry, to confess that he had been reprieved. It seemed like treachery, and the man thought so.

"Then you are a traitor," he said sternly. "You have given your friends away. May the curse of God——"

One of the red soldiers struck him across the mouth.

Without going back to the room where he had been imprisoned, Anton was set at liberty; and it was only when he found himself in the street, with a cold wind blowing in his face, that he realised the thing that had happened to him—the gift of life! He told me that he blubbered like a schoolboy after a hard flogging.

"A strange creature I must have looked," he said, "slinking across the Red Square under the Kremlin walls, without an overcoat, with my violin tucked under my ragged jacket, my hair all powdered with snow and my dirty face smeared with silly tears. Some peasants wrapped up to the ears in

sheepskins stared at me as they passed, and then crossed themselves as though they saw a devil."

Well, that was his first escape. He had a narrow shave afterwards when he was really guilty of being involved in a political plot for the overthrow of the Soviet Government. That was two years later, and in my opinion an act of madness on the part of that young Russian.

The terror had subsided, and the cheka, with its army of secret police, no longer arrested people wholesale for political conspiracy or sentenced them to death for counter-revolution. The truth was that they had broken the spirit of counter-revolution. The chance of success was so remote, the risk of discovery and death so certain for anybody who challenged the authority of Lenin and the Soviets, that these things were not worth while.

To be just also, it is certain from what I myself heard in Russia that the invasion of the white armies under Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel, and others, backed by France and Great Britain, and defeated one after another by Trotzky and his red armies, consolidated the power of the Soviet Republic by gaining the sympathy of the peasants and even of the intellectuals. The last thing in the world the peasants desired was the return of the whites, who would restore the old estates to their former owners; and the intellectuals, half starved as they were, and utterly disgusted for the most part with the communistic *régime*, had a racial pride which revolted against the invasion of Russian soil by rabble armies, financed, armed and paid by foreign nations. I think also that many of the old *bourgeoisie* who still remained alive in Russia, despite the tide of flight, the executions, hunger, disease and misery, had reached the conviction that another counter-revolution, and even the overthrow of the Soviet Government, which they hated, would only lead to fresh chaos, a new reign of bloodshed and the utter smash of all order in Russia, which would be unbearable. Much as they loathed the system of communism, they acknowledged that the Soviet Government was running the machinery of the state with something like order, had established peace within

its frontiers, and was abandoning its cruelties—after the first delirium of revolution—in favour of a really desperate attempt to maintain the life of the Russian people. It was not much, but it was something.

Anton Balakireff acknowledged all this when he told me his tale, and he admitted that he was guilty of the utmost folly in letting himself be dragged into a ridiculous plot engineered by a group of artists who painted scenery and designed costumes for the opera and ballet.

These young men and Anton himself, like the whole *corps de ballet* and the opera staff, were highly privileged, and even pampered, by the Soviet authorities in Moscow. While many of their friends were starving and freezing in unwarmed rooms during the winter months, unable to get a fourth part of the rations allowed by their food tickets—because of the failure of the harvest in the Volga Valley, and the resistance of the peasants to the requisition system—Anton and his comrades received as a rule their full supplies. It was meagre fare, but enough for life. Sometimes, indeed, they were treated to special distributions of chocolates, and even to extra rations of meat, which were like gifts from the gods.

The truth is that these artists, dancers and singers were the spoiled children of Soviet Russia. They belonged to the last sanctuary of light and beauty in this great empire of wretchedness, hunger, dirt and disease. They maintained an illusion of joy, well-being, intellectual and artistic progress, which was fostered by the Soviet authorities partly for propaganda purposes, partly because of an almost childlike vanity and pretence—they liked the world to believe, and to believe themselves, that they were idealists with a reverence for art—partly because many of those commissars in Moscow had a real passion for music and the ballet, according to the instincts of their race.

Anton told me that his life was not altogether unhappy in those days when he played first violin in the orchestra at the great opera house.

“We played a game of make-believe,” he said. “Once inside the theatre, we tried to forget the agony of Russia

outside. We worked hard, discussed the principles of art, rhythm, melody, with passionate argument. We forgot there was famine on the Volga; herds of refugees in Moscow dying like flies; homes for abandoned children, naked, typhus-stricken, like little skeletons. The ladies prattled about their costumes, quarrelled, laughed, danced, gobbled their *éclairs*, like a pack of giddy schoolgirls. We were excited about new lighting effects. We played practical jokes on one another. We divided into cliques, and were seething with jealousies, intrigues, loyalties and treacheries, in this little world of unreality.

"Sometimes reality broke in, and our souls were touched by the tragedy of life outside—my unfortunate soul, anyhow. As first violin, I could see the audience night after night. Needless to say, they didn't pay for their tickets in those days. They received them with their food tickets. They were mechanics, factory workers, men and women clerks in Soviet offices, railway workers, red soldiers, commissars, a few peasants here and there. It was strange to me at first to see a crowd of rough fellows in red shirts or overalls sitting in the imperial box, where, as a boy, I had often seen the emperor and empress, with their ladies and gentlemen, all glittering with stars and orders. The imperial eagles were covered under the red flag. Sometimes I used to stare at the faces in the stalls and boxes. Some of them were cheerful enough, but others made me shiver. As they listened to the orchestra they seemed to be drowned in melancholy. They stared out of eyes in which the soul was dead or damned.

"Now and then I saw people I had known in the old days—old schoolfellows. They were in working clothes like the others, with unshaven faces and dirty hands. I signalled to them from the orchestra, raised my hand and smiled. Sometimes they gave a start of recognition and raised a hand in reply, but more often they stared as though they saw only the tragedy of that life outside. They were hungry, so many of them, poor devils! I am talking of 1920, when the famine crept up even to Moscow.

"There were women of the old class there sometimes,

whose sharp cheek bones and sunken eyes were frightening. It was the sight of faces like those, night after night, which reminded one, sometimes unbearably, of a Russia outside this sham world of ours where we fed pretty well, and sucked chocolates, and played a game of beautiful make-believe. It was that reminder, those eyes in the audience, and the suffering of old friends—not so lucky as I—which made me listen to that fool Barkoff."

It appears from Anton's narrative that this Barkoff was a young painter inflamed against the Soviet Government, not only because of its severities in the time of terror, but because of its continued oppression of free thought and individual liberty. His smouldering fire of discontent burst into a flame when his mother, whom he adored, was put into prison—like thousands of others in Moscow and Petrograd—for the crime of speculation. That was a name given to private trading when people bartered their boots or furs or underclothing with the peasants for sacks of potatoes, packets of butter and cheese, and other foodstuffs, which supplemented their miserable rations. Everybody in the cities was doing it secretly, but every now and then they were rounded up by the police and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Barkoff's mother caught typhus in prison and died. It maddened the poor boy, and he started some kind of plot among his comrades, the main idea of which was to organise a secret propaganda among the officers of the red army for the overthrow of Lenin and Trotzky, and the establishment of a moderate government of free intellectuals. It was all very visionary and fantastic, and did not go beyond some secret meetings in Barkoff's studio behind the opera, and once in Anton's rooms in the Sophieskaya. A list of names of the alternative government was drawn up and typewritten. That was the most idiotic thing, endangering the life of every man on the list. Two or three women were admitted to the plot. They were dancers in the ballet, and one of them was Lubimovka, most wild in her way of talk, most passionate. She declared herself ready to assassinate Lenin with a little dagger which she wore in her corset.

Anton disliked this lady. From what I gathered from

him, she was for a time very warmly in love with him, and plagued him by her wiles and seductive ways. But at that time he was absorbed in his music and as cold as ice towards all women. Very rough in his way to them, I imagine, having seen his sulkiness and almost extravagant rudeness to ladies in England who made an idol of him.

With this lady, Lubimovka, he had a distressing episode one day behind the scenes of the ballet before the curtain was raised for that night's performance. She was in her ballet dress and looked charming, Anton said, in a flaxen wig. Yet not charming to him in that morose mood of his when, finding herself alone with him for a moment in the rather dark, dirty labyrinth of stage scenery, she suddenly put her arms about him and said, "I love you! Why are you so cruel to me?"

"I'm not cruel," he said, calmly and coldly. "But I'm too busy for sham romance. That kind of thing bores me. I'm more interested in my work, and I shall be glad if you will take your hands off my shoulders. The scene shifters are bashful men."

His irony—one must admit its abominable courtesy to a pretty woman—seemed to enrage her as though he had struck her with a whip. She sprang back from him, panting, with her eyes blazing like a cat's eyes in the darkness.

"I'll make you pay for those words," she said, in a hoarse whisper. "I offered you my love. It's now hate between us—and I'm dangerous when I hate, Anton Balakireff."

On the following night word was passed down the orchestra that Ivan Barkoff and Serge Tchichighanioff, two of the free intellectuals, had been arrested and taken before the cheka on a charge of counter-revolution.

Anton heard the news with cold terror, and could hardly play because his bow trembled so badly. A thousand times he cursed himself for a fool, and believed that he was doomed. Some one had betrayed his comrades. His own name would be revealed—perhaps was already known to the police. Who was the traitor? He racked his mind for an answer to that, until suddenly it came upon him with a blinding flash—Lubimovka! That cat-woman! She was

dancing in the ballet, and he raised himself in his seat to watch her as she pirouetted towards the spotlights. She was a great artist, he admitted that. But there was a devil in her soul. She saw him looking at her, and smiled. He knew then by something in her eyes that she had betrayed him.

That belief, that conviction, was shaken when he was still free from arrest one week, two weeks, three weeks later. Barkoff and Tchichighanioff were still in prison. No news could be gleaned about them. They had just disappeared, like so many others in Russia. Night after night, Anton expected to be arrested when entering or leaving the opera, and he was in a constant state of fear until his nerves were so shaken that he almost jumped out of his skin if the director or any friend touched him on the shoulder.

One day he spoke to Lubimovka and charged her with treachery. She denied the charge, but was clearly lying, frightened and perhaps repentant. They had a frightful scene together, and he threatened to choke her unless she told the truth. But, of course, she lied again, and was a spitfire.

It was three months later that he was arrested, when, after so long a time, he believed that he had maligned the lady and was safe. It was when he left the opera house, muffled up in his ragged old coat. Two men stepped up to him, and one spoke sharply.

"Anton Balakireff, you are our prisoner. We have orders to take you to the Kremlin before Comrade Radeff."

Radeff! Old Redbeard! Anton shuddered at the name, because it brought back the memory of that night when he had played for his life and that man was his judge, his critic and his saviour. It could not happen twice. Redbeard had said, "No politics!" He would show no mercy to a man whom he had saved once and who was now implicated in a treasonable plot. He had seen Redbeard many times at the opera. He always sat in the box on the right side of the proscenium, wagging his head, thrusting his plump fingers through the red hair about his flat face, applauding generously at the end of each scene. Anton had always felt sick at the sight of him, not because he was

ungrateful for his having saved his life, but because this man brought back the memory of the time of terror, that awful prison, his agony and fear.

"I will go with you," said Anton coldly to the secret police.

"Yes," answered one of them; "it's best not to argue with things like this."

He drew his hand out of his greatcoat just enough to show that he held an ugly-looking weapon.

"We may as well get a droshky and save boot leather," said the other man.

So, in a droshky driven by a young boy in a blue cloth coat with wide skirts, Anton and his two guards passed through the old gate by the shrine of the Iberian Virgin and then across the Red Square which is flanked on one side by the high walls of the Kremlin. The square was lonely. Only a few people from the opera crossed its broad space over the rough cobblestones.

"Which gate?" asked the young droshky driver.

"The Cavalry Gate," shouted the taller of the two policemen.

Anton Balakireff felt his heart turn to water as the lean horse of the droshky pulled up with a jerk and stumbled almost to its knees outside the gate, where two red soldiers paced up and down, their bayonets gleaming as they caught the light of a hanging lantern in the archway. The moon was high and bright and the dome of the Ivan Veliky and a score of other pear-shaped domes of the old towers and palaces and chapels within the fortress walks were golden and glistening in the white radiance. Black shadows were flung from wall to wall and tower to tower, but the palace walls gleamed white where the moonlight fell upon them between those gulfs of darkness. Not far from the Cavalry Gate there was a high flight of steps within the wall, lighted by a hanging lantern, and a red sentry stood there motionless, on guard, the silhouette of his figure, with his long coat and spiked cap, like an Assyrian soldier.

Anton was familiar with this aspect of the Kremlin. On his way to his cheerless room in the Sophieskaya he passed

it every day. But at this midnight hour, when he walked there as a prisoner, the moonlit walls and towers and those high, fantastic domes of shining gilt were invested with a kind of terror. In the old days, when the mediæval tsars had ruled from this fortress palace, the Red Square was the place of execution. Their enemies had been hanged in batches under these walls, and within them cruelty had sat enthroned. Now Lenin was there, and Radeff, and those cold brains which had imposed their will upon the Russian people. They, too, had no mercy for those who conspired against them. Anton Balakireff was being taken to his death. So he believed, being conscious of the folly which was now betrayed. He felt already dead, though his limbs still moved.

The guard inside the gate challenged them and then stood on one side when the two police agents showed their passes and spoke the word "Radeff." They had to pass three guard posts in this way before coming into the great quadrangle flanked by immense blocks of whitewashed buildings with many windows in which lights were gleaming. They were the old offices of the imperial court.

Anton's two guards led him through an archway, and then into the lower corridor of the main building and up three flights of stone steps to a higher floor and another long corridor, down which were many doors. At each end sat a young soldier huddled up in his long overcoat, with a rifle between his knees and a long bayonet above his spiked helmet of grey cloth.

Doors opened and women clerks came out carrying sheets of typewritten paper. Through an open door Anton saw a family scene. A slatternly woman nursing a baby, a man with a shock of black hair sipping tea out of a glass, two small boys sprawling on the floor listening to a gramophone playing some American ragtime tune. Other families were in other rooms down the corridor. Anton heard babies wailing, the shrill voice of an angry woman, and farther along the corridor the sound of a piano. A young girl with short black hair curled like rats' tails darted into the passage and emptied out some tea leaves from a big kettle into

a tin bucket. An elderly man with a grey flannel shirt tucked into his trousers, and carpet slippers, stood in an open doorway smoking a cigarette, while behind him, in the room, two young officers of the red army were playing chess by the light of candles stuck into empty wine bottles. Anton was behind the scenes of the Soviet Government. The Kremlin was like a swarming rabbit warren of Soviet officials with their wives and children.

One of Anton's guards tapped at the last door of the corridor. A voice shouted "Enter!" and in another moment Anton was face to face with old Redbeard, as on that night when he had been taken from his cell into this man's presence.

He was lolling back in a cane rocking-chair, wearing a tattered old dressing gown of blue silk. On the table by his side were a glass of hot tea and sheaves of papers in a wild litter. Around the room were bookshelves, from floor to ceiling, crammed with paper-bound volumes and stuffed with newspapers and bundles of letters tied up with tape.

"Ah!" he said without rising. "Good evening, my young fiddler! Push those papers off that chair and sit in front of me."

Anton was astounded by that friendly greeting, and a little cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

The two police agents stood in the doorway, and Redbeard waved to them and said, "Wait outside."

Anton sat stiffly on the wooden chair, alone with this chief of propaganda of the Soviet Republic.

Redbeard smiled at him through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"You have been a naughty boy," he said. "A very naughty boy—and after I saved your life at a difficult time! What have you got to say about it?"

Anton had nothing to say. He could not speak a single word, not knowing how much this man knew, nor what lay behind those smiling, watchful eyes.

Redbeard stretched out his hand and laid it on a cardboard covered *dossier* filled with papers.

"There is evidence here which would cause you to be

shot, young man, if I sent it to the cheka. I am loath to do it. I don't like the thought that you must stand up against a wall and fall with a bullet in your heart. Those hands of yours, those quick fingers, those sensitive young ears of yours—they make better music than a volley of rifles. It would be sad to see you lying crumpled up like an empty sack of potatoes. Such a waste! Such a loss to music in Moscow!"

Anton did not know whether he was gibing at him, playing with him as a cat teases a mouse before it pounces. It was like a pounce, a show of claws, when the smile left his face for a moment and he struck the papers a heavy blow and spoke with an angry snarl.

"This sort of thing is very vexing. So stupid! Can't you boys and girls cease such foolish nonsense? Seditious talk! Silly little plots to overthrow the Soviet Government! A Government so strongly established now that not all the world can overturn it! Don't you see how silly it is?"

Anton spoke for the first time, moistening his lips with a cold tongue.

"It was mere talk. Nothing more than that!"

Redbeard laughed harshly.

"Dangerous talk! Wicked talk! It gives an excuse to the cheka to revive old activities which we want to forget and have done with."

He suddenly swung forward in the rocking-chair, and stood up and paced about the room, pulling at his red beard.

"We have got beyond the time of terror. I never liked it. I'm a man of tender heart. Blood is not a pleasant smell to me. But it was necessary to destroy those who tried to undo the work of revolution. All governments are cruel in self-defence. A revolutionary government has enemies from within as well as without. It can only live by terror. . . . Bah! It's an ugly business, and I have been rejoiced that with the ending of counter-revolutions executions have been rare of late. Now you and a pack of young idiots try to revive the monster!"

"It was the folly of youth!" said Anton miserably.

Radeff snorted with scorn.

"It is youth that ought to be wise! We older men are tainted by the folly of the past. We can hardly wash our hands clean. The future of the world belongs to youth; but if youth plays the fool, what hope is there?"

"We are agonised by the misery of Russia," said Anton. "We are deadened by the suppression of free thought and free speech. The famine on the Volga makes us weep with its tale of death and pestilence. There seems no hope for Russia."

Radeff cried out, "My God! What folly these children talk!"

He put a heavy hand on Anton's shoulder and shook him a little.

"The agony of Russia? Yes. Don't you see that it's because of that agony that Russia must have peace and the co-operation of all its citizens? Free speech? Will that bring food to the mouths of starving peasants in the Volga Valley, whose harvests were burned and blackened by the destroying drought? There has been too much speech. Too much theoretical talk. Abstract theories! Russia dies of them. We must get trains to move. We must get our factories to work to make ploughs for the fields. We must buy seed grain from foreign countries and get it to the starving peasants so that next year's harvest may be sowed and reaped. Otherwise death and disease will creep close to Moscow and destroy us all. . . . You talking boys and girls! You intellectual rebels! Supposing you were to overthrow the Soviet Government, hang the heads of Lenin and all of us on the Kremlin gates—do you think that would help Russia, feed her hungry folk, restart her factories, bring fuel to her engines? It would be the death blow of the Russian people."

He stopped speaking, and expected Anton to answer him; but that young man sat silent, staring at the tattered carpet and wondering what all this talk meant to him, why he had been brought here under arrest to listen to it, whether it was a prelude to his death or imprisonment.

"My people," said Radeff, speaking again, "were peasants of the Volga Valley. Do you think that I have no heart

for the folk down there? That drought was not the fault of the Soviet Republic. It was Nature's merciless cruelty, which is worse than that of men. I want to save them. I am working to save them. You can help me, Anton Balakireff!"

"I?" said Anton, stupefied.

"If you have any loyalty," answered Radeff, staring at him through his spectacles.

He opened the *dossier* of papers on his table and took out a typewritten sheet.

"This is a letter to you," he said. "You have not read it, because our police censor brought it to me first. It contains an offer to you—from England. A good offer. A great sum of money for a few months' work."

"An offer? A great sum of money?"

Anton stammered his questions. He could not understand.

"It's a musical agency in London," said Radeff. "They have heard of your great talent from some of the refugees—those foolish traitors who escape from Russia to tell lies about the Soviet, to conspire against the life of Russia. Never mind! It is the offer that interests me. Ten thousand English pounds for a season in London. That is nearly ten thousand million roubles at the rate of exchange. That money would save many peasants' lives in Russia. You shall go and bring it back, and save your own life at that price. Is it a bargain?"

So that was the secret of his visit to the Kremlin! That was why Anton Balakireff was not in prison like his two comrades, or dead from a volley of bullets, as they might be.

Anton's heart leaped within him. He could feel the thump of it. England! A journey to England! Escape for ever from this life in Russia, with its hunger, its misery, its secret police, its political executions! Never again would he come back, if once free of its frightfulness.

"I will go!" he said breathlessly. "It's a miracle!"

"Yes, you shall go," said Radeff. "But only to earn the money and come back. Every rouble of it for the starving peasants. You understand?"

"They shall have the money," said Anton. "That is understood."

"It is well understood. I believe you to be an honest young man, though very foolish. In case you are not honest—and life is full of temptation—I shall keep hostages for your homecoming. If you are not back in Moscow by October tenth of this year—that is, three and a half months from now—two poor young men will be shot on that day. I mean your comrades, Barkoff and Tchichighanioff."

Anton drew a deep breath and put a trembling hand up to his pale forehead.

"I will come back," he said; "I will bring the money."

Radeff was pleased with him. He accepted his word. He enlarged at some length on the great opportunity that had come to this young man for the service of his people. He would also be able to do a little propaganda in England on behalf of Russia. People would listen to him. They would believe what he told them. He might earn more than ten thousand pounds by appealing to rich English people on behalf of his famine-stricken people.

"England is corrupt and hypocritical," said Radeff; "but she would be glad to ease her guilty conscience by so-called charity."

The conversation ended by Radeff ringing a bell which brought back the two police agents.

"I have no further need of you, comrades," he said pleasantly. "This young man is a loyal citizen. Our suspicions were not justified."

"As you will, comrade," said the taller man obediently. He saluted and left the room with his companion.

"You will need a paper to get out of the Kremlin," said Radeff.

He scrawled his name on a printed slip and gave it to Anton.

"I am your guardian angel," he said, with his chuckling laugh. "This is the second time I save your young life."

Then he struck Anton a light blow on the shoulder.

"Do not risk a third time, young man. I have not unlimited patience."

That was a threat. It was spoken as such, with sinister and deadly meaning. Then he held out his plump hand.

"You will start for England next Friday. I will arrange your passport—and in three months and a half we meet again! Good luck, and a safe return!"

Anton took his hand and stammered a few words of thanks. Then, he told me, he burst into tears. This relief from the fear of death, this great adventure before him, and this escape, were too much for his frayed nerves.

"Foolish child! Foolish child!" said Redbeard.

He patted him on the arm, and then drew him close and kissed him, so that Anton's tears wetted his hairy face. There was something human and kindly in this extraordinary man who had become one of the chiefs of terror. So—to write a platitude—is human nature compounded strangely of mixed qualities, evil with good, cruelty with kindness, and no mortal man may unravel its mysterious threads of instinct and impulse.

That, briefly—for I have omitted all but the salient things—is why Anton Balakireff came to England, after that bargain in the Kremlin by which he bought his life for ten thousand pounds in English money, to be paid at the end of a concert season, with two other young lives as hostages for his return.

Rather a tragic bargain when one knows what followed, as I do, intimately, from Anton's own confession, told to me in an English country house, late at night, before a log fire in an old chimney place, when the flickering light of the burning wood played ruddily upon the white face of this young Russian and cast dark shadows about his deep-sunken eyes.

Life seemed so secure in that English house, where all the household were in bed at that hour, long past midnight. We were so far from the agony of the Russian people, from the power of the cheka, from the prisons in Moscow, from the great famine on the Volga, where in hundreds of villages Russian peasant folk saw their children wither and weaken and laid themselves down to wait for death, more kind than life, as afterwards I saw with my own eyes. It

was before the great work of British and American Relief which saved so many of those folk.

I have said in the beginning of this narrative that Anton was tempted by cowardice. Imagine the force of his temptation, if you can. That promise he had made to go back seemed hard enough when he had crossed the Russian frontier at Sebezh, and knew, with a sense of ecstasy, that he could speak freely again, without fear of police spies; that he was beyond the reach and authority of the cheka itself; that he had the liberty of the world before him and in his soul.

It was as though he had been uncaged. He found himself singing, laughing, shouting, because of this sense of liberation. It was the lifting of fear from his spirit, and relief from that oppression which weighed heavily on him in Russia, as upon many minds which intellectually or emotionally rebelled against the communistic system and its establishment of equality by universal wretchedness.

In England, after a quick journey by way of Riga and Berlin, he tasted for the first time since boyhood the luxury of life, the refined comforts of an old civilisation, unchanged—so far as he was aware—by the cost of war. Since 1916, at the latest, he had fed on rough fare, not always enough for physical well-being, and often not better than semi-starvation. He had shivered in unheated rooms, gone dirty for lack of soap and water, dressed in old, threadbare, grease-stained clothes, kept company with men and women as shabby as he, as hungry as he, as dirty as he, as miserable, though they made jests about life and death. The melancholy of people reduced to ruin by war and revolution, followed by famine and pestilence, was the dark background which overshadowed the spirit of Russian youth.

Now, in England, as the guest of rich folk, who admired his genius, he wallowed, as it were, in the luxury and grace and beauty of life. Out of the money advanced to him on account of expenses—over and above his fees—he was able to dress with elegance, and found a positive joy, an almost spiritual thrill of exquisite emotion, in his clean white shirts and collars, in his wonderful trousers and polished boots

and white spats, in his silk handkerchiefs and coloured socks. Those things represented to him not only the foppishness which is a natural instinct of youth, but the contrast between the grace of life and, for example, that prison cell in Moscow where he had lain on filthy boards among typhus-stricken, lousy, unwashed comrades.

Is it any wonder that his mind searched for a thousand reasons why he should be absolved from that pledge to go back—into the cage again, into the squalor?

When he sat at a table covered with snow-white linen in any private house or public restaurant, and touched the gleaming silver, and saw the light of candles twinkling on wine glasses and flower-patterned plates, the memory of his little old room in Moscow with its iron bedstead, its dirty walls with cracked plaster, its unwashed dishes from which he ate his meagre rations like an animal, with beastly hunger, overwhelmed him with shuddering disgust. Never could he go back to that! He would not go back! He had escaped by the grace of God!

Russian exiles in England crowded round him after his concerts, embraced him, kissed his hands, sent him flowers, which were heaped in his dressing room.

Some of these people were friends of his father and mother, who had greeted him as one risen from the dead. His father, General Balakireff, was now living in an old English country house, complaining bitterly of poverty, cursing the Soviet Republic which had ruined him; yet, as Anton saw, still rich enough to live in good style, to entertain a crowd of friends like an English gentleman.

All these Russian refugees complained in a tragic way of poverty; and there was, indeed, a horde of poverty-stricken Russians in Europe, paupers on foreign charity. Yet Anton met many who were driving in motor cars, dining at expensive restaurants and behaving as though they were on a holiday in England, as in the old days before war and revolution. The wisest of them had invested their money in foreign securities before the crash came.

It was in his father's English home at Godalming, in Surrey, that Anton met the lady who added the last and

most tremendous temptation to his desperate desire to break the pledge he had made with Redbeard in the Kremlin—that promise to go back. She was Lady Mary Wickham, and he came to desire her with the whole ardour of his Russian temperament. That was inevitable, seeing her beauty—utterly English in type—and this young man's sudden awakening to the beauty of life.

I have told that he was cold to his women friends in Russia, and especially to that lady, Lubimovka, who betrayed him. That I think was because of his melancholy surroundings and the dark shadow cast on his spirit by the misery of his country. Anyhow, he was set on fire by Lady Mary Wickham.

She lived near Godalming, and rode over to see his mother, and, as I can vouch, was a pretty picture on that black horse of hers, in her riding coat and breeches. A gallant-looking girl, with merry brown eyes and a complexion not found among Russian women. She had a brain, too, which is not so usual with English girls of that class.

She was not like the other women who sent him flowers and kissed his hands on the concert platform. She laughed at all that, and treated him rather as a sulky boy who was getting spoiled by admiration; sometimes as a rather wild animal whom she was inclined to tame by kindness, or, if need be, by cruelty.

He had been deliberately rude to her at first when his mother had introduced them; and then, afterwards, when she came to a garden party and said, "Tell me about Russia," as they walked together in the rose garden, he talked to her with a stark brutality of the things he had seen and suffered in the time of the terror, not sparing her any detail of horror and loathsomeness. She was not shocked.

She listened gravely, and nodded her head and said, "That's life at its ugliest. We've been saved from that in England—so far."

He tried to shock her again by saying, "It might do you some good—you comfortable English people, in your sheltered gardens and your pretty clothes. The cruelty of life hasn't touched you: You'd be all the better for a little

misery and dirt and lice and hunger. It would be a spiritual lesson."

She was not at all put out by that speech, but she denied the necessity for such things in England.

"Our men—and the best of them—went through the dirt of war all right. They weren't soft. They did not escape from the lice which you seem to think so good for their spiritual education. The trenches were crawling with them."

That was their first argument. They had many others, in evenings when this lady came to dinner with some of his father's friends, and afterwards, when he went riding with her on one of her horses.

He found himself defending the Soviet leaders and their philosophy—even their tyranny—which in Moscow he had hated. He raged against the Russian refugees who had fled from their country and spent their time abusing the Russian people and trying to persuade European governments to invade Russia again, and so create more anarchy and revive more terror and spill more blood.

"Then you're a Bolshevik?" she asked coolly.

"No," he answered sullenly. "But I'm a Russian, first and last. I prefer a communist who tries to serve his country rather than a tsarist renegade who tries to ruin it."

One can imagine these conversations. Anton told me the gist of some of them, and laughed in a melancholy way at that devilish trick of his brain which prompted him to quarrel with this girl, to say brutal things to her, to break down her English simplicity and to startle her sweet, frank mind by revolutionary ideals against which, in Moscow, he had argued interminably with his Russian friends.

"A guilty conscience," he told me. "Every time I sat down to a good dinner I thought of the starving peasants on the Volga, and sickened over my food. The more I gloried in the elegance and beauty of English life, the more I was disgusted with myself for yielding to its charms, while friends of mine were pining in the prisons of Moscow, and others living in squalor on short rations. Besides, the self-satisfied complacency of you English people, your hypocrisy, the brutal contrast of wealth in London, made me swing,

against my will, against my own intelligence, in favour of the communistic ideal which has dragged Russia down to hell, or at least to an equality of misery in which one faces the stark truth of human tragedy.”

Some of those arguments with Lady Mary Wickham took place before General Balakireff, and distressed that old gentleman acutely. There was a violent scene one night when the old man denounced his son as an agent of Bolshevism and threatened to turn him out of doors.

Anton's mother was hardly less distressed, and wept bitter tears when Anton vowed—sincerely, he told me—that the famine on the Volga was not to be put down against the Soviet Government, but was an act of Nature which they had done their best to overcome by heroic effort.

All this time, you must understand, Anton was giving his concerts at the Queen's Hall and entrancing great audiences by his mastery as a violinist, so that his reputation reached Paris, Berlin and New York. Of that side of his visit I know very little, being ignorant of music and the musical world.

The crisis of his agony—for his mental conflict reached that point—came toward the end of September, when he received one word from Moscow, by way of Riga. It was a telegram from Radeff, and the word was “Remember.” It was handed to him as he left the concert hall before motoring down to Godalming.

That evening Mary Wickham was coming to dinner with his people, and he had decided to declare his passion to her. She knew already that she had tamed him, and that her wild beast, as he called himself, was ready to lick the dust off her riding boots or to lie down at her feet in adoration.

They had had a little scene together the very day before, when he had suddenly seized her hand—they were in the garden, so I gather—and kissed it. She had pretended to be angry, and walked away; but he had seen something in her eyes which told him that she was not really angry, and that by some miracle he had gained this girl's good will and grace.

He had quarrelled his way into her heart! Because she

had tamed him, she loved him, in her quiet, mirthful, English way. He was sure of it, and by that revelation life had become a glory, and joy pervaded him.

Now this word came from Moscow, and that "Remember!" chilled him like an icy whisper from the voice of fate. Only two weeks remained before the fulfilment of his pledge. He would have to leave London in five days' time to get back to Moscow by the date fixed. Well, he would not leave London! He would be damned rather than go back. They could have the money. But they would not get his body and soul. He would stay in England with Mary Wickham, and the devil take Moscow.

As he stepped into his motor car he tore the telegram into small pieces and let them flutter to the pavement. That was the last of Redbeard so far as he was concerned.

That evening there was quite a large party at General Balakireff's house in Godalming, including two Russian princesses, the painter Laleham, Vardon of *The Times*, Woodgate the novelist, and myself. Lady Mary Wickham came with her sister Evelyn.

Anton sat next to Mary Wickham, and looked to me as though he had been drinking. His face, very pale as a rule, was flushed, and there was a wonderful shining brightness in his eyes. He was a little drunk, not with wine, but with passion and exaltation.

I noticed how tender his voice was when he spoke to the girl at his side, how he gazed at her now and then with the devotion of a dog's eyes. But they spoke very little. Mary Wickham was aware of his mood, and guessed the cause of it, I think. She had a queer little smile about her lips and a shy look in her brown eyes.

After dinner there was tea on the covered terrace outside the house—it was a warm night and very beautiful in the purple dusk. Anton Balakireff and Mary Wickham moved away down the garden, and I saw their figures at the bottom of the pergola, where they stood a while above the tennis lawn. Once it seemed to me—though I am not absolutely certain—that Anton tried to take her hand. Presently they came back to the terrace, not speaking at all. Anton was

very pale, but there was still that shining light in his eyes.

"Play something, Anton," said one of the Russian ladies. "Out here in the garden, on this charming night, your music will sound divine."

He refused for a time, sulkily, until Mary Wickham touched him on the sleeve and said "Play!" Then obediently he went into the house and fetched his violin.

Standing there below the porch of that old house, looking towards the garden with its purple twilight under a blue sky in which the afterglow of the sun still lingered, Anton played some little Russian melodies, very simple and sweet, such as peasant women might sing to their babes. Then suddenly, after a pause in which the company murmured their pleasure, he raised his head, thrusting back the long black lock from his forehead, and struck a strident, savage note, and then played the queerest, maddest stuff I have ever heard.

Frightfully Russian! I could tell that, though I do not understand music. I am bound to say I neither understood it nor liked it, except here and there when the rhythm of it was rather stirring and when I could follow some kind of melody of the old folk-song kind. But my likes and dislikes do not matter. What was more interesting was its emotional effect upon the musician himself, and upon the Russians in his audience.

They seemed to understand its meaning, which, plainly, was tragic and pitiful. I now know from Anton that it was the thing he had played that night before the cheka when he was brought from prison and saved his life by his fiddling. The two Russian princesses became very pale, sighed, and wept a little, as I could see by their glistening eyes in the half darkness.

As for Anton himself, it is certain that he saw nothing of this English garden before him. He was staring far away—to Russia, where his own people were dying of hunger and living in misery, so many of them. His black eyes were large and luminous. His lips were firmly pressed into a line of pain. Sweat broke upon his forehead.

I looked at Mary Wickham. She was sitting up rather straight in a white wicker chair, staring at Anton. She had

a queer smile about her lips, as though this strange foreign music startled her and perhaps amused her. I think now she guessed the meaning of it to herself. It meant the call back to Russia of this man who was her lover.

In those wild notes of his was the spirit of his race, and its voice claimed that man's soul and gave him courage to resist the lure of England and this English girl and the beauty of life, because he could not desert his people in their tragedy nor forget his pledge of honour on their behalf.

The last strident notes shrieked into the English garden, and then Anton, with trembling hands, put his violin and bow on a little wooden tea table, and after a few words of Russian, ending in a harsh laugh, went abruptly indoors.

"Very fine! Wonderful stuff!" said Woodgate, the novelist.

One of the Russian ladies murmured the word, "Sad!" and then whispered to the other princess.

General Balakireff, the father of Anton, sighed with something like a groan and said, "Our poor Russia!" Then he invited the company to go indoors because of the falling dew.

Mary Wickham took Madame Balakireff's hands and said, "It's time for me to go. Tell your son I think I understand the meaning of what he played. Give him my love."

She bowed to the other ladies and moved away with the general towards the garden gate. It was her last visit to this house before Anton left.

It was that night when Anton and I sat together and he told me his story, for an hour or more. It was what I have written, but it was told in broken English—though very fluent—which I have not tried to imitate. It was also a more intimate confession than I have given of the conflict in his mind between honour and dishonour, cowardice and self-sacrifice.

One thing he told me was rather startling.

"As I was playing," he said, "I saw two figures in my father's garden, quite plainly, as I see you now in this fire-light. They were Barkoff and Tchichighanioff, my two poor

comrades, who are hostages in prison for my return. They were pale and weak, and stretched out their hands to me. If I stayed here with my lady I should be damned forever, because their lives would pay the forfeit for my dishonour." He left England two days later, and, as I know from a letter I have had, reached Moscow three days before the date to which he had been pledged.

"Old Redbeard kissed me on both cheeks and grabbed the money," he wrote. "It will feed many poor, starving folk." Then he told me that the famine was still raging; that Lenin had abandoned the strict laws of communism; that private trading had been established; and that, in spite of famine, there was more hope among his friends. He added a postscript:

"When you see Lady Mary Wickham, tell her that her wild beast is in his cage once more, with a broken heart. But he hopes to escape again and get it mended."

V: THE VISIONS OF YVONNE

THAT affair of Yvonne Monnier, which was a nine days' wonder in France, only reached English-speaking countries in a few insignificant paragraphs in the daily papers.

Yet there must be thousands of English officers, and not a few Americans, who remember, vaguely perhaps, but as one of the lurking memories of war, a bedridden girl who used to set a gramophone playing in a courtyard of Bailleul.

All through the war, until a day towards the end of it, she used to be brought out on fine days into that yard of the Hôtel de France—a very filthy place, but as good as a public paradise to young officers straight from the hell of Ypres, not far away as gun-fire goes—and while they were drinking wine she used to lie back on an old horsehair couch and play them merry little tunes of France on that cheap instrument with a tin funnel, which stood on a table by her side. Most of the officers used to have a word or two with her, touched by that girl's delicate, flower-like beauty, which gives a fair mask sometimes to disease.

Quite a number of them, indeed, used, in their good-natured way, to draw their chairs close and beg her to give them another tune, and make her smile by their mistakes in French.

She came to know many of them by name, or by sight, and used to ask about them from other officers when she missed them for more than a few weeks. So often the answer was the tale of death.

"The Lieutenant Jenkins? Oh, he was killed, *le pauvre garçon*, in the last big battle. You heard the guns a week ago?"

Yes, she had heard the guns then, as every day for four years, sometimes with the low growling thunder of the daily routine, up by Kemmel and the Messines Ridge, or away

by Hooge and the Ypres Canal, sometimes rising to fury, so that she knew death was busier than usual with those English and Scottish soldiers who liked to listen to the music of her tawdry gramophone.

When there was no one in the courtyard of the Hôtel de France, or when officers were drinking their wine and not talking to her, she used to listen intently to that distant gun-fire, and there was a look of anguish in her dark eyes which she hid at once if any one came near or spoke to her. She set the gramophone going to the little old tunes as her one act of service to boys who were mostly sentenced to death—she knew that—in those places where the great noise was. It pleased her to think they liked the music, and that it helped them to be gay with their wine.

A child she seemed to them. Yet she must have been fifteen when the war began and nineteen on the day when the Germans made their northern attack and came close enough to Bailleul to get their guns registered on the town hall and the chimneys of the Hôtel de France, and then to sweep its streets with high explosive shells until the town was a bonfire and the flame of it rose as one torch to the sky, and there was nothing left but ashes and charred bricks.

The people took to flight when the bombardment began, and with them Yvonne was carried on a farm cart. The gramophone which had played so many tunes to so many friends was burnt with the Hôtel de France, and all that was in it. But by some queer freak of neurosis the girl's malady—some spinal weakness—was cured by the shock of terror, or by some ecstasy of emotion, and there was no further need of the old horsehair couch on which she had lain for years until carried from it in the strong arms of her father.

A miracle the people called it, those who had known her in Bailleul, and now were fugitives in St. Pol, where her family found shelter, but French doctors know of other cases of the kind. Yvonne herself gave all her thanks to God, and doubtless it was her long suffering and this sudden cure, and the thoughts that had come to her when listening for four years to the labouring of guns, which caused in

her a spiritual exaltation extraordinary in its influence upon many young men of France. Part of this story is known through distorted accounts in the French Press, cynical and rather cruel in their flippancy, but there are few outside Picardy and Paris who have heard the real facts of this new chapter in the history of mysticism and human love. It is worth telling as a curious tale.

After the armistice, and just before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Bertrand Monnier bought the inn called the Coq d'Or from its former owner, his cousin, with the little fortune he had made out of British officers at Bailleul. It was not so big as the Hôtel de France, but it had a good custom from the townsfolk of St. Pol, a small place not far from Arras, and from the local farmers who came in once a week on market days. His wife was a good cook, in a plain way, with such things as *escalope de veau* and *bœuf à la mode*, and like all French women could produce a *pot au feu* of a good full taste. Bertrand Monnier himself was a sound judge of wine, and after hard haggling, bought his cousin's cellar, stocked with excellent *Moulin à Vent*, *Mercurey* and *Nuits* at a cheap price.

Suzanne, the servant, who had done most of the housework at Bailleul, with a few old hags under her shrewish command—she was a level-headed girl, with only occasional lapses of amorous passion with ostlers and peasant farmers—had escaped in the same cart with Yvonne, and attached herself to the new household as a matter of course. Jean Berthoult, her brother, who had fought at Verdun and most other parts of the French front—with three wound stripes, the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Médaille Militaire*—was put in charge of the yard with its stabling for four horses and its garage for touring cars and the town omnibus.

Altogether the new establishment was not a bad successor to the Hôtel de France, though Bertrand Monnier and his wife never ceased to lament the glories of their former state—unless Yvonne were present. A reproach in her eyes accused them of ingratitude for grumbling when so many of their former neighbours had lost everything.

Husband and wife, hard and shrewd as most of their class

in Picardy, yet with a touch of superstition, were often silent in the presence of Yvonne. They had been used to her lying on the old horsehair couch, helpless as a baby, and had treated her always as a child, tenderly enough, and with simple, matter-of-fact helpfulness and devotion. But this cure of hers seemed to make her a stranger to them. The cure itself—the “miracle,” as it was called by some of the old women and the *curé* of St. Pol—had frightened them. “*Bons Catholiques*,” as they called themselves, they had the usual indifference of the French *bourgeoisie* to religion. They were always ready to give a hearty “*Bon jour, monsieur le curé!*” to the parish priest, but they did not go to his church more than once or twice a year, except on special occasions like weddings, christenings, funerals, and the thanksgiving for victory. They were tolerant, but religious emotion seemed to them an interference with the common-sense duty of adding one franc to another, and they resented the idea of any clerical meddling with their private business, their way of life, or their political opinions. Even for *le bon Dieu* they had no more than a friendly tolerance. God was all right, as long as He did not interfere or tyrannise. Heaven was one thing, no doubt inevitable in course of time. The Hôtel de France or the Coq d’Or was another thing, of more immediate importance. It was therefore a shock to them, almost a grievance, certainly a fear, when God seemed to interfere too closely with their accustomed habits of mind and life by the miraculous cure of Yvonne. For they did not deny that it partook of the miraculous.

When Bertrand Monnier had come to lift her down from the farm cart, after that journey from Bailleul, she had cried out to him, “*Je suis guérie! Grâce à Dieu!*”—“I am cured! Thanks be to God!” While he stood there with a cold sweat on his face, because he was afraid, she had clambered out of the cart herself and walked unaided, as white as chalk, like a ghost girl, into the courtyard of the Coq d’Or.

Suzanne had laughed, with a kind of hysteria, saying it was very *drôle*, but Bertrand’s wife had stood gazing at her daughter with a kind of dazed wonderment, and then

had scolded her, with an anger that was also a little hysterical, for daring to walk when for fifteen years she had been lying down.

After that they watched her furtively, and even at table when they dined privately together, with only Jean and Suzanne, they were constrained in the presence of this daughter who had changed so utterly. She laid the table, and they would watch her carrying the plates and dishes with a look of incredulity, so undisguised by Bertrand that he would sit there with stupefaction in his eyes and his mouth a little open like a peasant amazed. Sometimes he would growl at her:

"That's too heavy for you, little one!"

She would smile at him with a look of ineffable happiness.

"I am strong! Every day I get stronger! See, I can lift this coffee-pot as though it were a feather!"

It was true that she became rapidly as strong as most young girls, and, but for the extreme pallor of her face, which made her eyes look larger and darker, there would have been no reminder of those years when she lay paralysed. She walked with grace and held her head high, and though her features were not faultless, the line being of the Picard type, she was of undeniable beauty, as admitted even by the wits and cynics of Paris who attempted to bismirch her. One of them was not wholly wrong when he said that she had the smile of the Gioconda.

There was one young man in St. Pol to whom she seemed more beautiful than any girl in France. This was Jean, the brother of Suzanne. For a time after his coming to the Coq d'Or he was sullen in her presence, and tongue-tied when she spoke to him. Not for a long time would he tell her of any incident in the long agony of the defence of Verdun, in which he had gained his *Médaille Militaire*, but would shrug his shoulders, red to the tip of ear, and say, "*C'est idiot, tout ça!*"—"All that's ridiculous!"—and then slouch out to the yard perhaps to wash down the motor omnibus which he drove twice daily between St. Pol and Hesdin.

At meal-times he sat mostly silent, but stared furtively at the girl as she moved about just as her father and mother did, but with different ideas in his head. He was not frightened of her because she had been cured by a "miracle." He was frightened of her because she was so beautiful, he thought, and different from all the other girls whom he had courted and kissed in the old days before the war, when he was something of a rogue with girls. Beautiful, white and delicate, like a statue of the Madonna in the church of Ablain St. Nazaire before it was smashed to dust by German shell-fire.

His sister, Suzanne, used to talk of her to him.

"Mlle. Yvonne is, I think, a saint, Jean. That, or perhaps a little *touchée*. (By which she meant "dotty.") She talks too much of God. Always it is, '*grâce à Dieu!*' That is a bad sign. She makes me feel as though I were in church."

"It ought to be good for you, then," growled Jean.

Suzanne had quick eyes and a sharp tongue. With her brother she quarrelled always, though she adored him privately as a great hero of France, but very stupid.

One day she said to him:

"You pretend to dislike Mlle. Yvonne, *n'est-ce-pas?* You won't speak a civil word to her. But you would lick the dust under her feet. I can see love in your eyes, as hungry as a starving dog!"

Jean caught her roughly by the arm and told her to "Shut her beak," or he would beat her with his leather strap.

"Bah! What I say then is true!" said Suzanne, shooting out her tongue at him and escaping up the passage to the kitchen.

It was true. Jean would have lain down in the mud and let Yvonne step on him if she had a mind to.

There was a little church at St. Pol to which the girl used to go on week days, after dinner, when all household work was done. Mostly she was alone in the church at that hour of summer evenings, when the sun went down redly below the harvest fields along the Arras road, and

dusk crept up the High Street of St. Pol, and inside the church it was dark except for the red lamp before the altar.

Jean followed Yvonne at a distance, sat on a low stone wall outside the church while she stayed inside, and met her as though by hazard when she came out.

"Why do you go so much to church?" he asked. "It's not natural. It's bad for anybody's health."

"I go to talk with God," she answered simply.

"Bah!" said Jean. "That's child's talk. God never answers. He doesn't hear. In the trenches God didn't care a damn for all the cries of the wounded."

"He heard them," answered Yvonne.

Jean turned his head sideways and looked at her sombrely.

"How do you know that? I say God didn't hear. Or if He heard, then He doesn't care. I was there. Why do you deny what I know?"

He spoke sulkily, in his usual way with this girl.

"He heard," said Yvonne, with positive assurance.

"*'Cré Nom!* How do you know?"

Jean spoke almost with violence.

"He has told me," she answered. "He has spoken to me—in the church."

"*C'est idiot ça!*" said Jean again. "That's ridiculous."

He thrust his hands into the side pockets of his jacket and started whistling some low music-hall song as if to express still more his disbelief in that kind of talk. But secretly he was perturbed. And angry. He was angry because Yvonne, when she talked like that, was still further removed from him by a spiritual gulf which he could not pass. He wanted to take hold of her arms and kiss her on the mouth. If she had been an ordinary girl he could have done that. But when she talked of God like that it was impossible. Just as it would have been impossible to kiss the little nun who nursed him at Châlons when he had his second wound.

Something happened to Yvonne one day, when she came out of the cemetery along the Arrat-St. Pol road, where so many French and English soldiers lay buried.

Jean saw that something had happened to her by the way she looked.

"She looked as though she saw something which others could not see," he said afterwards. "Her eyes were very big and afraid."

He had followed her to the cemetery, just as sometimes he followed her to the church. It was, he said, excusing himself, to protect her from the village louts who wandered about looking for adventures with any girl after dusk. He saw her standing in the line of English graves, one of those long lines of stone crosses, better kept than the French graves on the other side. He thought she was looking for the names of some of the young English officers whom she had known in Bailleul. Presently she knelt down and seemed to pray for a long time, until Jean was bored and lit a cigarette as he leaned over the gate. It was almost dusk—an evening in September when the nights were drawing in. A little white mist crept up from the graves and the grass plots. A star came up and twinkled above the distant woods. A golden oriole was singing now and then in a tree by the roadway, and a field-mouse was roaming up and down a bank a yard away from Jean, where he stood quite still. . . . Suddenly Yvonne sprang up from her kneeling attitude. She looked towards the star, and stood very rigid for quite a minute with her head raised and her hands clasped. A sudden wind rose and stirred the grass on the graves and made a moaning noise. For some reason Jean was afraid. He felt as though his blood ran cold when Yvonne gave a loud cry and ran towards the gate where he was standing.

"*Qu'est-ce-qu'il y a?*" he asked. "What's the matter?"

For a moment or two she did not recognise him. She had that queer look of "seeing something." Then she clutched his arm and began weeping, and told him she had seen something "terrible."

"What kind of thing?" he asked.

She told him she had seen all the dead rise out of their graves. They were all young soldiers, English and French. She knew the faces of some of them. They were the boys

to whom she had played her gramophone tunes in the yard of the Hôtel de France, when she lay on the horsehair couch. Some of them had their heads bandaged, and others were swathed in bloody rags, and some wore their gas masks, so that they looked like beasts. They all began laughing, and one of them said: "We were betrayed, comrades of the great war!" Then all down their lines, others said: "We were betrayed!" One of them, who seemed their leader, spoke again. He said: "We fought for a war to end war. The world has betrayed us." The others said: "We are betrayed. There is no peace in the hearts of men." Then the one who seemed like their leader came close to Yvonne. She could see his face. It was the face of a young English officer, very noble and kind, whom she had seen in Bailleul. He spoke to her, and said: "Tell France to work for peace. Tell the youth of France that another war will destroy them as we were destroyed, unless they have peace in their hearts. Speak to the heart of youth, Yvonne, so that it may lead the world to peace."

That was what Yvonne told Jean. He listened to her with astonishment and a sense of fear. He said several times: "*C'est idiot ça!*"—"That's ridiculous!"—but all the same he was troubled.

If Yvonne were *touchée*—"dotty"—as Suzanne said, it would be easy to understand. But she was wonderfully serene and gay, and full of common sense in daily life. She was quick to make little jokes. She added up the books of the Coq d'Or, three rows of figures on each big page, and never made a mistake. No, she had more sense than any girl of St. Pol. Yet she believed she had seen the dead rise from their graves. She said she had heard them speak. She repeated the very words. While Jean Berthoult said, "All that's ridiculous," some voice inside his head said, "Perhaps it is true. . . . Certainly it is true. It is a warning to France of future war. Unless youth works for peace. The young soldiers, perhaps, who had escaped the massacre by a fluke of luck. Like himself! '*Cré Nom!* Like himself!"

Yvonne said nothing about that strange happening in the

cemetery to her parents at supper that night. Yet later she must have told her mother, and Madame Monnier must have told Bertrand, her husband, for Jean, lying in his bed that night in his garret room, heard the voices of husband and wife talking—talking, instead of Bertrand's habitual snores within ten minutes of dropping his boots to the bare boards. Once Bertrand shouted out some angry words which Jean heard through the big crack in the floor below his bed.

"C'est idiot, tout ça!" "It's ridiculous, all that!"

It was his own phrase of incredulity, but in the tone of Bertrand's voice there was fear as well as anger.

For some weeks Yvonne was busy in the usual way, making beds, laying the tables, helping Suzanne and her mother in the kitchen. She seemed almost quite happy to Jean, who watched her with moody eyes. Only she had moments, now and then, when her spirit seemed to withdraw from her surroundings, and she was lost in her own thoughts. Several times she caught Jean's eyes fixed upon her, and at such times she became a little pale, as though they shared a terrible secret together.

A strange thing happened again at noonday in the great cornfield which sweeps away southwards from the Arras road. Yvonne and Jean were walking among the stooks on a Sunday morning after church time. It was the first time they had walked together like this for pleasure. Jean was in his best clothes and felt awkward and self-conscious, but happy because he was beside Yvonne, who wore a frock the colour of lilac and a straw hat with a big red rose.

"How peaceful it is here," she said. "No shadow of the war falls on these fields, though not far away is the desolation of devastated France."

"I remember marching across these fields in the second month of the war," said Jean. "They were in stubble, as now. It seems only yesterday, though sometimes a hundred years ago."

They sat down with their backs to a wheatsheaf. Jean sucked a straw and watched a grasshopper on a withered leaf.

Presently Yvonne stood up, looking up into the sky as she had done in the cemetery.

"Do you see?" she asked Jean, in a strange, frightened voice.

"I see an old crow going home," said Jean.

"Do you not hear?" she asked.

"I hear the grasshoppers chirruping and the larks singing," said Jean. "What are you staring at?"

Her eyes were wide open, all the colour ebbed from her face, and she stood very rigid.

Jean sprang up and went towards her, and spoke roughly:

"What the devil is the matter with you?" he asked.

She began to tremble like a victim of shell-shock, and then caught hold of his arm and began to weep.

"They have gone," she said. "It was the war in the air. The sky was full of aeroplanes. There were thousands of them, raining down destruction with poison gas. I heard a great cry go up from France. It was the cry of death. Then an aeroplane came swooping very low, and close to me a voice spoke very clearly and said: 'So it will happen if there is no peace in the heart of youth.' After that there was a great silence, and all the world seemed dead."

"You are mad," said Jean. "You are an imbecile."

He spoke brutally, but he was scared and awe-stricken. He did not believe that Yvonne was mad. Against his will, his common sense, his hatred of mysteries outside the commonplace, he believed that this girl heard things and saw things which other people could not see or hear.

They walked back again to the Coq d'Or silently. In the courtyard, before going in, Yvonne whispered to him:

"Do not say a word to my father and mother. They would be unhappy. But, somehow, I must tell the young men of France. They must work for peace, or France will be destroyed."

"Bah!" said Jean. "Take my advice and do not speak of it. They will take you away and put you in a home for imbeciles."

She became deathly pale, and made the sign of the Cross upon her forehead and heart.

It seems to me plain, from all the information I can get—a good deal from Jean Berthoult—that the girl became convinced at this time that she had received a special revelation which bade her preach the spirit of peace to the youth of France. At first she began in a timid way to talk to the young farmers who came on market days to the *table d'hôte* of the Coq d'Or. At that time there were strained relations between England and France, who did not see eye to eye on the subject of German reparations and other matters of world policy. There was much wild talk, in the old style, about "*perfidie Albion*," and those young farmers of Picardy and Artois, who had all been soldiers in the Great War, accused England of betraying the interests of France in all parts of the world. Yvonne waited at table on them, with Madame Monnier and Suzanne, and often at these times she startled the company at the long table by rebuking them for ingratitude towards the English, who had made such great sacrifice of blood in the soil of France.

"But for the help of the English," she said more than once, "our dear France would be destroyed."

At another time, when all the talk was about the "*sales Boches*"—those German beasts who were refusing to pay their debts and already preparing for revenge, she silenced all the clamour by a few strange words.

"We must be chivalrous to Germany and not press them too hard. Unless we kill their hatred, and our own, by a spirit of peace in the brotherhood of youth, there will be another war worse than the last, and France will be destroyed."

"*Tais-toi!*" growled Bertrand Monnier. "Be silent, Yvonne. What do you know of politics?"

He was afraid that his daughter's words might offend his customers.

They were not offended. There was not one of them there who did not know that Yvonne had lain paralysed for many years, and had suddenly been cured. Because of

her strange history, and her delicate look, and the child-like purity of her face, they were more tolerant of her words than they would have been, perhaps, if an ordinary woman had spoken them. Some of them laughed loudly and chaffed her.

"You can't treat tigers with chivalry, little one. They go on wallowing in their muck."

"Your daughter is pro-Boche, Bertrand!"

"Some English officer captured her heart in time of war!"

"If there's another war we will finish the Boche next time! No Treaty of Versailles, letting them off at every point. We'll smash them to bits, from the Rhine to Berlin."

But there were other young men at the table who took up Yvonne's argument.

"Win or lose, another war would finish France. That's certain. Mlle. Yvonne is right. We must educate people towards the international idea. Peace and democracy."

"Bah! German democracy is a sham. They're all militarists."

"German Labour desires peace, like all working folk."

Yvonne spoke again.

"The youth that died will be betrayed if the last war leads to new conflict. They fought in a war to end war."

Some of the men laughed again.

"We used to talk like that in '14. It was our simplicity."

But again some of the others spoke seriously.

"Mlle. Yvonne tells the truth which the world has forgotten. It was for that ideal we fought. We have all been betrayed by the politicians."

"By the evil in our hearts," said Yvonne.

Jean, watching, watching, always with his mind absorbed in the mystery of Yvonne, saw that some of the young farmers spoke privately to the girl, dawdled about the courtyard to get a word with her. He saw her in conversation with Henri Chadelaide, of Hesdin, and with young Fouquet, of Rollencourt, and with Marcel Lapin, of Beaumerie, among others. She spoke to them seriously, with a wonderful light in her big eyes, and they went away thought-

fully, and with a queer, frightened look, as though she had told them strange and fearful things.

In the market place she went about among the stalls talking to the young men there, just a few words which left them gaping, or with a puzzled look, or, sometimes, laughing in a jeering way.

"What did she say to you just then?" asked Jean of one of them, an old comrade of his, named Armand Merville.

"She said: 'Youth must work for peace, or France will perish!' What did she mean by that?"

"God knows!" said Jean.

"It sounded like a prophecy," said Armand Merville. "'*Cré Nom!*' She spoke the words like a new Jeanne d'Arc. It gave me a creepy sort of feeling."

Jean Berthoult was startled by that reference to Jeanne d'Arc. He had had the same idea. Yvonne had visions like the Maid of Domrémy. And just as the French soldiers in the last war had said ribald things about Jeanne d'Arc, at the bottom of their hearts they had believed in her as he believed in Yvonne Monnier.

In some mysterious way she seemed to influence the people, and especially the young men, to whom she spoke her words about peace. Young Fouquet, of Rollencourt, gave up drinking in the estaminets, and spent his evenings reading books of history and philosophy. Armand Merville, who had been a libertine with the girls in St. Pol, and never went near a church, "took religion," as it was called, to the astonishment of his comrades and the anger of his former sweethearts.

It was probably that which excited the girls of the market place against the daughter of Bertrand Monnier. Her habit of talking to the young farmers who came in with their pigs and sheep or the wandering pedlars who sold ribbons and laces to the women at the stalls, aroused their suspicion, and then their fury, when such a case happened as that of Armand Merville.

After a war which had killed the flower of French youth there were not so many young men that they could afford to let a gallant lad like Armand be taken away from them

by some religious or secret influence. It was clearly traceable to this Yvonne Monnier. She went smiling and whispering among the young men, and some of them were clean daft about her, in some mysterious way which they did not trouble to explain to the girls who were ready to drink beer with them in the estaminets, or to answer their ribald chaff with repartee which was not timid. That kind of girl, anyhow, had a secret dislike of one like Yvonne who would never speak a coarse word, nor suffer one to be spoken in her presence.

"Why doesn't she go into a convent?" asked one of them. It was Margot, who had come from Lille, thrust out by her family, it was said, because of her wild ways.

"There are no young men in convents, my cabbage," said Louise Bidoux, the sempstress, with a high laugh. "Yvonne Monnier has no eyes except for strapping boys."

"She talks of peace and love," said little Margu rite, who sold buttons on a stall opposite the Coq d'Or. She winked at Louise, and said: "She could give us a few tips"—*tuyaux* was the word she used in French—"on the way to catch nice young men."

"She's no better than a slut," said Louise fiercely. "A coquette with the face of a sick baby. They're always the most vicious."

Word was passed from one girl to another. Evil words, full of envy and malice. There were angry glances at Yvonne on the following market day when she came out of the Coq d'Or, and, passing between the lines of stalls, looked about, it seemed, for some of the young men she knew.

"Look at her now!" said Louise Bidoux. "Her eyes are roving for one of our boys. She is a bad one!"

There was a little shriek of laughter from Margot when Yvonne caught sight of a lad named Pierre Cauchin, who had lost an arm in the war, and came into the market place with a young heifer.

Yvonne went up to him, and while they talked together in low voices he stood bareheaded before her, as though she were a great lady.

It was a girl named Diane Voisin who made a scene that

might have ended in tragedy. She made a rush at Yvonne and grabbed her arm.

"What are you whispering there to Pierre Cauchin? He is my boy, and none of yours. Keep your black eyes off his face."

"Yes! Diane is right. Clear out of the market place. What do we want with you here, stealing our lovers?"

That was from Louise Bidoux, standing with her arms akimbo and with a flushed face and swollen eyes.

Other girls crowded round, some laughing, others abusing Yvonne, a few silent and ashamed of such ill-manners.

Yvonne seemed taken by surprise. It was clear she had no idea of the ill-will against her which had led up to this scene.

"What have I done?" she asked. "I cannot understand! I was only speaking to Pierre of the misery of war and the need of young men with peace in their hearts."

"Go and tell that to your grandmother!" shouted Louise. "We all know what's behind that baby face of yours."

She uttered a frightful and obscene word, which brought a hot wave of colour into Yvonne's face.

"God forgive you, Louise," she said.

Those words seemed to infuriate Louise Bidoux. She turned sideways to a stall and picked up a potato and threw it full at Yvonne's face. It struck her a glancing blow on the forehead, so that she reeled a little, but did not fall.

It was a signal for other things to be thrown. Diane Voisin hurled a cabbage, and another struck Yvonne from other hands.

She stood there, amazed yet courageous. She did not attempt to run away, but crossed her hands on her breast. Real harm might have come to her but for Jean, who suddenly strode into the fray shoving the girls on one side with his strong arms.

"*'Cré Nom!*" he shouted in a loud voice. "What's the matter here? If you throw another thing at Mademoiselle Yvonne I'll beat you black and blue. Every one of you."

His presence stopped further violence. But they made him the victim of their abuse.

"You're one of her lovers! A fine lover who lets his wench make eyes at all the other girls' boys."

"Shut your beaks," said Jean.

Yvonne put her hand on his arm. Together they left the market place, followed by the jeers of some of the girls, and harsh screams of laughter from Louise Bidoux and Diane Voisin.

Some account of that scene seems to have reached the *curé* of St. Pol, for that same day he called at the Coq d'Or and asked to see Yvonne, and remained with her in the private parlour for more than an hour.

He was a tall, youngish man, with a deep scar down one side of his face which had been cut open by a German bayonet in the trenches at Fricourt in the early days of the war, when, like thousands of French priests, he had fought as a simple soldier. Afterwards he had reached the rank of sergeant, and had been three times cited before the army for valour. He had a brother who was Canon of Notre Dame, in Paris and a fashionable preacher who attracted large congregations because of his rather fiery eloquence. The *curé* of St. Pol had also a gift of oratory, but was a man of great simplicity of soul, to whom his years as a soldier had been a martyrdom.

Doubtless it was that experience which made him profoundly moved by Yvonne's "revelations," or "visions," as he afterwards called them. Her miraculous cure—he did not doubt at all the direct act of God in that recovery—had happened, of course, before his return to St. Pol after the war, but the narratives of Yvonne's neighbours had made a deep impression upon his mind. Apart from that, the strange beauty of the girl, the extreme purity of the soul that looked out of her dark eyes, her childlike modesty, and her spiritual character were of singular attraction to a priest whose ordinary parishioners were such girls as those in the market place, and the uninteresting *bourgeoisie* of a small provincial town. Yvonne's message to the heart of youth and her "vision" of another war more terrible than the world had yet seen, in which the sky of France would be thick with aeroplanes raining down poison gas, unless

the new generation of youth were converted to the spirit of peace, seemed to him divine in significance and warning.

There were some newspaper reporters in Paris who afterwards ridiculed this provincial *curé* as a man whose mind had been unhinged by "shell-shock," while others accused him of endeavouring to dupe simple souls by bolstering up the hallucinations of a crazy girl. My own reading of the case is that the *curé* of St. Pol was a man soul-shocked, rather than shell-shocked, by the tragedy of war's experience, and of simple faith, touched, perhaps, by romanticism. I think, also, that intense love of France, overwhelming in its emotion, made him revolt from the thought of another war in which the last youth of France would be sacrificed, even if victorious.

After his interview with Yvonne in the parlour of the Coq d'Or, the *curé* was completely under the spell of her strange "message." Several letters which he wrote at this time to his brother, the Canon of Notre Dame, show the great emotion which stirred in him. Like Jean Berthoult and Armand Merville, he was reminded of the peasant heroine of France, and he went as far as to call Yvonne "our new Jeanne d'Arc."

In his sermons he touched constantly upon the text of "Blessed are the peacemakers," and Christ's command to forgive our enemies. He alluded to Yvonne in all but name when he said that to one soul in their midst the vision had been vouchsafed of the terror of future war, if the youth of France failed to exorcise the devil of hatred from their hearts, and did not work for a brotherhood of humanity.

Out of his own experiences he drew a dreadful picture of war's horrors—but child's play, he said, to what would happen in another war—which caused a sensation among his little congregation so profound that one girl was carried out in a swoon, and a young man from Rollencourt had had a renewal of shell-shock and shook as though with ague.

Such words gave offence to some members of the congregation. Madame le Baronne de Beaumerie, an old lady of seventy-five, who boasted proudly of sixteen grandchildren killed in the war, coughed loudly during one of the *curé's*

sermons, and afterwards wrote a letter to his bishop accusing him of Bolshevism.

In the parlours, cafés, and estaminets of St. Pol and the neighbouring villages, there were excited conversations on the subject of the *curé's* discourses, with reference to the mysterious influence of Yvonne Monnier. This was doubtless exaggerated, and with each exaggeration rumour spread in a fantastic way, not merely in St. Pol, but gradually all over Picardy and Artois, as pedlars, young farmers visiting distant folk, travelling tinkers, and others, told stories of a girl saint who prophesied another war, unless France proclaimed a crusade of peace. This girl, Yvonne, said some of them, had the power of healing. Those who touched her clothes, even, were cured of maladies such as rheumatism, gout, sciatica, the *ticdouloureux*, and St. Vitus's dance. Others affirmed that she spoke on the most familiar terms with St. Michael and other angels and saints. On the other hand, there were some who said she was an evil creature, a paid agent of Bolshevism, a spy of the British, and a corrupter of French youth. Her influence over the *curé* of St. Pol, they said, was of a most vicious kind.

None of these stories reached the ears of Yvonne herself. She was only aware of curious glances cast upon her as she walked, and presently of an increasing number of strangers who came from distant villages to stare at her as she went about her work in the Coq d'Or.

Now and then, strange, sick-looking women in the market place would stretch out claw-like hands and touch her as she passed. Sometimes they knelt in front of her and asked her blessing, which she gave with the simple words, "May God bless you," but with timidity and surprise.

A young crippled lad, well known in Picardy, because he played his flute at weddings and festivals all over the countryside, flung himself down at her feet one day, as she walked alone along the Arras road, and implored her to heal him as she had been healed.

"I have no power of healing," she told him, but he vowed that if he might kiss her hands once he would be cured, because God loved her.

Laughing, she held out her hands, and he kissed them, and then, with a strange, incoherent cry of joy, sprang to his feet without his crutches, as he had never done since a bullet touched his spine at the beginning of the war. Shouting, and laughing, and weeping at the same time, the boy—François Meunier—went in advance of Yvonne to St. Pol, and proclaimed his cure in the market-place, so that when Yvonne came back a little later, pale and serious, and much disturbed by what had happened, a crowd gathered to meet her, some of them cheering and others kneeling as she passed; while even the girls like Louise Bidoux, Diane Voisin, and Margot, and others who had flung cabbages at her, were silent and disconcerted.

Dr. Hervé, and others who examined François Meunier after this occurrence, pronounced his cure to be a case of "intense auto-suggestion, consequent upon emotional neurosis," but, as in the case of Yvonne's own recovery, this scientific explanation did not disturb the conviction of the majority of simple folk that it was a miraculous affair.

Bertrand Monnier and his wife went about their work in the Coq d'Or with the pretence that their daughter was an ordinary *jeune fille*, of delicate health perhaps, but otherwise normal. They pooh-poohed all the stories concerning her mysterious powers and prophecies. Sometimes Bertrand had violent outbursts of anger when his customers questioned him on the subject, and thundered out his affirmation of "*C'est idiot, tout ça*"—All that's ridiculous! But in their own bedroom the husband and wife whispered together, and raised their hands to heaven, and quarrelled with each other about the mystery of Yvonne and the way to deal with it.

"She'll ruin our business!" said Bertrand. "Already some of our customers have gone over to the Hotel d'Artois, because they don't care to mix their wine with politics and religion."

"Yes, but our *clientèle* still grows because of Yvonne's reputation," said his wife. "Young men come from a distance to get one glimpse of her."

"My belief is we should do well to put her in a convent,

or pack her off to Aunt Mathilde, in Paris. This business begins to get on my nerves."

"She is a model daughter to us, Bertrand!"

"I don't deny that. But why couldn't she remain as she used to be when I carried her about from her chair to her bed?"

"It would be better if Jean married her," said Madame Monnier in a low voice.

Bertrand gazed at her with his mouth open.

"Jean! . . . He hasn't ten francs in the world. And the girl isn't the marrying sort."

"Jean worships her very shadow. He watches over her like a faithful dog."

"He's a good lad," said Bertrand. "I'll think over your idea, wife. Marriage, babies, all the toil and moil of wedded life might cure the girl of that queer stuff in her head."

With argument like that the husband and wife talked together about their daughter, as afterwards they confessed.

Bertrand spoke to Jean in the stable yards that day with gruff good humour, but so abruptly that the lad was startled.

"You'd better marry Yvonne, *mon vieux*. Why not? She's a good girl, and one day the Coq d'Or will be worth good money. I'd not be ashamed of you as my son-in-law."

Jean stammered his reply, all red in the face, and then pale.

"Nothing doing in that way. Mlle. Yvonne is too good—for me or any one. A saint of God, monsieur!"

"Bah!" said Bertrand. "Marriage would cure all that nonsense. It puts every woman into her right place. I leave it to you. You have my permission, gladly given, Jean Berthoult."

Jean muttered something about Mademoiselle Yvonne having great work to do in the world. But Bertrand did not listen to him, and went out of the yard with a gloomy look.

Apart from those few moments of strange, trance-like vision, first in the soldiers' cemetery, and then in the corn-field, I can find no evidence that Yvonne was abnormal at other times, beyond the unusual thoughtfulness and spiritual

emotion of any girl who has lain long paralysed before sudden *cure*, and all that time has heard the noise of guns and watched the sacrifice of young manhood. It is true that she believed herself to be dedicated to a mission of peace, but apart from all mysticism and "supernatural" experience, that might have happened to her. Perhaps even that idea might not have developed as a fixed faith and purpose in her spirit had it not been for the instigation—encouragement is a better word—of the *curé* of St. Pol, who believed firmly that she was a handmaiden of the Lord, destined to lead France in a crusade for universal peace. Constantly he came to question her upon the duty of French youth to avert the horror of new wars, and it is difficult to know whether he was more astonished and uplifted by the simplicity and common sense of her answers, or by the spiritual fervour of her belief that the warnings which had come to her were divine in their manifestation.

Be that as it may, it was due to the influence of Yvonne Monnier upon his mind and purpose that the *curé* of St. Pol organised a society of young Frenchmen, under the name of the League of Peace, which led to serious political disturbances far beyond the parish of St. Pol. At first that League included only a dozen or so of those young men who had been especially touched by the words and personality of Yvonne. Jean Berthoult was one of them, and among the others were François Meunier, Henri Chadelaine, of Hesdin, young Fouquet, of Rollencourt, Marcel Lapin, of Beaumerie, and Armand Merville. They met once a week in the *curé's* parlour, and made some simple "resolution" to work and pray for world peace. They also pledged themselves to persuade their comrades to join the League.

This organisation, so modestly started, grew and spread with startling rapidity, mostly among ex-soldiers who had returned to their farms and hamlets. From the market place of St. Pol, where tongues wagged apace on the subject, the news and idea of the League travelled far afield. Probably some of the travelling salesmen, and the tinkers, and others, talked about it in their wanderings. The *curé* of St. Pol was overwhelmed with correspondence, asking

for information, especially with regard to the "visions" of Yvonne Monnier. Local branches were established, and some of the members, undoubtedly, were actuated by political motives of a revolutionary character—Communism, Syndicalism, and so forth—and desired to use the new "League of Peace," with its religious sanction, as a moral cloak for evil and destructive purposes. It is certain that several of them had nothing but contempt for its association with the mystical character with which rumour endowed Yvonne Monnier.

The *curé* of St. Pol, simple man as he was, had no notion that this evil element was creeping into his "League," and made no inquiries as to the character of those who applied for membership. Each name was entered by him with joy as another pledge to world peace. That was regrettable, because it was the inclusion of certain young men well known to the police in Paris as revolutionary characters, among them Charles Benoist, the author of many leaflets of Bolshevik propaganda circulated secretly in the factories of the working-class districts of Paris, which attracted the attention of the police authorities to this "League of Peace," and caused a hostile report to be submitted to the Government.

Through the police the news leaked out to the Press, and paragraphs appeared ridiculing Yvonne Monnier as a degenerate and half-witted girl, and attacking the *curé* of St. Pol as a corrupter of youth, a traitor to France, and a renegade priest.

A reporter was sent down by *La Nation* to investigate the affair, and, under the guise of a young man ardent for world peace, obtained interviews both with Yvonne and the *curé*. His account, with photographs, filled the front page of *La Nation*, and was written, very cleverly, in a spirit of irony and caricature, which excited the laughter of Paris.

Following the laughter there was a great deal of hostile comment, and one paper went so far as to call for the arrest and imprisonment of the *curé* and his "female impostor," Yvonne Monnier, on a charge of conspiring against the safety of the Republic. On the other hand, this publicity

attracted the attention of large numbers of young men of idealistic hopes in the future of world peace, who enrolled themselves as members of the League.

The crisis happened in the month of February of last year, when the political situation of France was troubled by the reactions of the Washington Conference, the failure of Germany in the matter of reparations, and strained relations with England. These causes of political passion were entirely outside the simple interests of the *curé* and Yvonne, who exalted the spirit of peace without entering into political controversy of narrow or national limitations. But it was unfortunate, and, indeed, tragic, that this heat of politics should have coincided with the march to Paris of the "Peace Leaguers."

The idea of that march originated, I believe, with that Canon of Notre Dame who was the brother of the *curé* of St. Pol. Fascinated by the accounts he had received in private letters from his brother, of Yvonne's "visions" and sanctity, and ardently in sympathy with the spiritual purpose of the League (I am told also that he was not free from political bias against the Poincaré Government), he seems to have made the rash and ill-advised suggestion that Yvonne should come with her adherents to Paris and preach a crusade of peace and virtue in a city which, according to the canon, was "utterly demoralised by the intoxication of victory, and plunging down the road to perdition."

When the idea was first mooted to Yvonne by the *curé* of St. Pol, she became intensely pale, and it was clear that for a time her courage failed her at the thought of such an adventure in the public gaze. The idea of Paris also frightened her. She had never been in any town larger than Bailleul, and to her imagination Paris was monstrous and overwhelming.

"I am only a simple girl," she said. "They will laugh at me in Paris."

"To be laughed at for God's sake is the suffering way of all saints," said the *curé*.

"But I am no saint," protested Yvonne. "I am but a weak and ignorant girl."

Afterwards she yielded to the idea, reproaching herself for cowardice because of her refusal.

To Jean Berthoult she revealed her fears and her resolve.

"I am afraid no good will come of this, dear Jean. Paris will mock at us. But if it is God's will, as the *curé* says, I dare not disobey."

"How does he know that it is God's will?" growled Jean.

From the first he was hostile to the idea, hating the thought of Yvonne appearing so publicly before the mockery of the world, and fearing for her health. Yet, when he saw that her mind was made up, his fidelity was so strong that he was the first to volunteer to be one of her band. Indeed, it was more than volunteering.

"I go with you," he said, with a kind of stubborn insistence.

Bertrand Monnier and his wife were dismayed by the whole affair, yet also secretly flattered by the thought that their daughter should make a great appearance in Paris, escorted by the best young men of her district. After violent altercations with the *curé* and much argument with Yvonne, they gave their consent.

There was a striking touch of mediævalism about this march to Paris. Some fifty young men of the peasant and farming class assembled in St. Pol, and gathered round a banner which had been worked for the *curé* by some of his old women. It was a great silken banner on which were embroidered the words: "*Pax Domini Sit Semper Vobiscum*"—"The peace of the Lord be with you always." This was carried by young Fouquet, of Rollencourt, and François Meunier, the former cripple who had thrown away his crutches.

Yvonne was placed in a farm cart driven by Jean. She wore a white frock with a blue sash, and when she stood up in the cart to speak some words to the crowd in the market place, a murmur of astonishment rose because of her pale beauty and saintly look.

"She is like a young Madonna," said one of the crowd.

Others spoke the name of Jeanne d'Arc.

Yet there was hostility as well as admiration in the market place, and but for the presence of the *curé*, who stood in front of the cart holding a crucifix, there might have been some such scene as when the market girls had assaulted Yvonne. Shrill cries of abuse rose around the group of young men and the girl in their midst.

Yvonne's words, in which she proclaimed her obedience to a duty which she had not desired, and spoke of her call to arouse the spirit of peace in the heart of youth, were drowned by derisive laughter and foul words in the *argot* of the market place. Opinion and emotion, however, were divided, and some of the women wept and others knelt down to receive the *curé's* blessing, as the little procession started on its way to Paris, in the direction of Amiens and by way of Doullens.

From villages on the way other recruits came from the fields and farmsteads, mostly young men of a class similar to those of St. Pol. At each village the procession halted, the banner was raised, and Yvonne, standing in her farm cart, with Jean at the horse's head, spoke a few words to the assembled folk. I have had no verbatim report of her words. From Jean's account she seems to have spoken with a spiritual fervour that gave a deeper meaning to very simple words. She appealed to the young manhood of France to prevent a future war, which would destroy civilisation itself in a rain of death from the sky, and begged them to have peace in their hearts towards all men. That was the sum of all her little orations. There was in them no word of politics, no accusation against the French Government, no talk of militarism.

She spoke often to Jean as he drove the cart while she sat behind, surrounded by her escort on foot.

Once she said to him:

"I have a feeling that I shall never go back to St. Pol."

"That is ridiculous," said Jean. "What makes you think that?"

"Something tells me," she said.

At another time she spoke of her strange cure.

"I am sorry sometimes that I do not lie still on my old horsehair couch, playing the gramophone to English soldiers. I was very happy then, except for the sacrifice of men."

"You are not happy now?" asked Jean.

"I am a little afraid," she said. "People look at me with anger and mockery. I would rather be back washing dishes in the Coq d'Or."

"Soon we'll be back again," said Jean.

At night Yvonne slept in village inns. The *curé* of St. Pol lodged with the parish priests. Jean slept in the farm cart, and the other men lay in barns and outhouses. Each morning the procession started early again, in the direction of Paris. The men became rather footsore and silent. The *curé* limped sadly, because an old wound in his left leg troubled him. But he had a look of great happiness because of the new recruits that swelled his ranks as the march continued. By the time they had reached Picquigny, on the outskirts of Amiens, there were nearly two hundred men marching behind the banner of peace.

It was in Amiens that the first outburst of hostility took place. Along the main street, called the Street of the Three Pebbles, there was a dense crowd. The newspapers had printed descriptions of the march on its way down from St. Pol, and had labelled it as "Anti-militarist and Pro-Boche." Yvonne was slandered as a girl of "notorious life," and as "an epileptic of degenerate morals."

As the procession advanced, there was a loud "booing," from people on the sidewalks. Women shook their fists and men jeered. The name of traitor was hurled at the *curé* of St. Pol. Outside the station, in the big "place," when Jean pulled up his horse and Yvonne stood up in the cart to speak to the crowd, a tumult arose, ugly in its expression of human intolerance.

"Better get out of this," said Jean, speaking to the *curé*. "I don't like the look of things."

"It is what we may expect," said the *curé*. "Our Lord suffered from the insults of the mob before His message reached the hearts of men. Courage, my dear lad!"

"Bah!" said Jean, sullenly. "Do you think I'm afraid

for my own sake? I don't give a curse for this *canaille*. I think only of Mlle. Yvonne and her safety."

The *curé* mounted the cart by the side of Yvonne and spoke to the crowd. But they would not hear him. The word "Bolshevik!" was shouted at him, and but for the number of "Leaguers," and their sturdy look, the mob would have upset the cart. Yvonne was white, but she stood clasping her hands without any word of fear. She spoke very gently to the people around. Only the words, "Peace! Peace!" could be heard, because of the surging to and fro and the angry voices.

As a result of this hostile demonstration, some of the young men who had marched in the procession showed signs of failing resolution, and began to quarrel with each other. It was ridicule which seemed to hurt them most, and scared them at the idea of entering Paris. A few showed signs of physical cowardice, and six slunk away into the back streets of Amiens and did not rejoin the ranks. Among them was Marcel Lapin, whom the *curé* had regarded as one of his stalwarts. He went off after a few words with Jean Berthoult.

"I'm going back. This is a farce. Also, my boots are bursting."

"It's your guts that fail," said Jean brutally. "You were always a coward."

"Not such a sacred fool as you are, *mon vieux*. Yvonne and the *curé* are leading you into a mare's nest. There's a good train back to St. Pol."

"There's a rabbit hutch nearer than that, Marcel Lapin," said Jean.

The *curé* was wounded by this desertion, but comforted himself by the thought of Judas.

There were no sensational episodes between Amiens and Paris, which took five days' walking, with frequent halts. Two reporters from Paris hung on the outskirts of the march and sent extravagant accounts to their papers, arousing prejudice in advance.

Yvonne was much fatigued, and her bodily strength seemed to wane, so that she drooped in the cart behind

Jean. The thought of Paris still alarmed her, not on account of personal danger, but because it loomed in her imagination as a city crowded with evil.

To Jean she spoke her secret thoughts. They two seemed to be close to each other, and alone, as she sat in the cart and he drove, with the young men tramping ahead of them and behind.

"I am very grateful to you for all your loving care, Jean," she told him once, and that made him flush red to the tips of his ears.

"I'm your servant," he said, in his gruff way.

"My lover," she answered simply. "I am very sorry you get so little reward, dear Jean. But I am different from other girls. One day you will marry a good, strong woman."

"Never that," said Jean, "so long as you remain unwed."

"That will be always," she answered again. "I am not meant to marry."

Farther down the road she spoke of her love for France.

"Willingly would I die to serve our dear country," she said. "I should die happy if, by one word, I could make it safer from future war."

"Living folk serve it better than the dead," growled Jean.

"Perhaps not," said Yvonne. "The spirit of those who died in the war is working for us. It is they who will build the new France."

Then, later, she spoke of Paris.

"I must be brave in its streets," she said. "Even now I seem to hear its roar of traffic and the mocking laughter of its crowds. It sounds in my ears like the breaking of waves."

"Paris is only a bigger St. Pol," said Jean. "I was there in the war once or twice. Not a bad place, but full of profiteers and foolish wenches. I prefer St. Pol."

Sometimes the procession went down lonely roads with woods on either side. The *curé* sang hymns, which were taken up in a chorus by some of the young peasants. Yvonne loved the light of the sky, making a tracery through the bare woods, and delighted in the birds that twittered

on the boughs. But always in the villages there were crowds gathered at the news of their coming, and a mingling of hostile cries with friendly greetings.

A woman who had lost three sons in the war came to kiss Yvonne's skirt, and said: "Save our little ones from the agony of the trenches."

A young blind girl came out of a wayside cottage, and as Yvonne passed cried out: "I see a shining light! It is the way of peace!"

In another village an old woman shrieked at Yvonne as she passed:

"May you be torn limb from limb, slut of Satan!"

One night, before the cart stopped outside a village inn, there was a rosy light in the sky. "The lights of Paris!" shouted one of the men, and the others, mostly peasant lads who had never been to Paris, stared at the glow in the sky with a kind of awe.

Yvonne stood up in the cart and gazed also at the flickering radiance with her hands crossed upon her breast.

"The heart of France!" she said. "So full of passion and loveliness and sin! I never thought I should go there one day."

"God has led you to its gates, to preach the way of peace," said the *curé*. "It is a divine mission, m'm'selle. We will raise the banner of peace in the heart of Paris."

That night Yvonne did not sleep in a wayside inn. The innkeeper and his wife refused her a lodging, in spite of the *curé's* pleading.

"We had a son killed in the war," said the man. "We do not let our rooms to those who undermine the loyalty of France."

It was in vain that the *curé* protested their love of France, their devotion to the heroic spirit of youth that died to save France, their mission to prevent further sacrifice of youth in future strife. The innkeeper was stubborn and insolent, and used obscene words.

It was too late to march farther. The young men were tired, and Yvonne at the point of exhaustion. That night she lay in the farm cart, covered by Jean's greatcoat and

another lent by Fouquet, of Rollencourt. The *curé* lay beneath the cart and slept as soundly as when he was a soldier of France in a hole in the earth. Jean did not sleep at all, but stood on guard by the cart, pacing up and down, up and down, until once, towards dawn, Yvonne called softly to him:

"Jean, are you there?"

"Mademoiselle?"

He went instantly to the side of the cart and stood on the axle and saw that Yvonne was sitting up with the coats about her.

"It is nothing, Jean. I was only a little afraid . . ."

"Afraid of what?" he asked.

"To-morrow we enter Paris," she said, as though that explained her fear.

"I shall be with you," said Jean. "If there is any trouble you have me to defend you. They'll have to walk through my body to lay a finger on you."

She stretched out her hand and touched his head.

"You are brave and kind."

He took hold of her hand and put it to his lips.

"I would die for you," he said simply.

"Perhaps in heaven we shall be together," she told him.

"For ever and ever, Jean."

"Without you it is no Heaven for me," he said.

Then the *curé* stirred and called out:

"*Qui est là? Qui parle?*"

Jean stepped down from the axle and said:

"It is nothing. I keep guard."

But the *curé* was unable to sleep any more and crawled out from beneath the cart, and then stood up and paced up and down with Jean until the light of day.

A cottage woman sold them some coffee and bread, which brought a little colour into Yvonne's pale face. The men foraged round for their own breakfasts. Then the march began again, and at three o'clock on that afternoon they reached the outskirts of Paris by the gate of St. Den, and at four o'clock passed down the boulevard on the way to the Tuileries. The *curé* marched in front of the farm cart,

and two of the men held aloft the banner with its words of peace.

Yvonne stood in the cart, with her hand on the rail of Jean's seat for support. Behind marched the rustics of Picardy and Artois, to the number now of about a hundred. Most of them carried stout sticks, cut from the woods to help them walk. Their boots had broken, and most of them limped a little. They were unwashed and unshaven, and straws and dirt stuck to their clothes from their nights in barns and outhouses. Under the leadership of the *curé* of St. Pol they sang a hymn as they marched, but some sang one line and others another, so that it was not impressive.

Vast crowds were in the streets to watch them pass, typical Parisian crowds, made up of *midinettes*, or shop-girls, young clerks, the loiterers of the boulevards, and young ragamuffins from the Montmartre district. There were also a number of *terrassiers*, or labourers, of the roughest kind. What had happened at Amiens was repeated in the streets of Paris in an exaggerated way. There was an outburst of booing and hissing, and shrill, hostile cries. Some of the *midinettes* shrieked with laughter at the sight of Yvonne standing in the farm cart in her white frock and coloured sash. She seemed to them amazingly comical.

It was not until the procession reached the Place de l'Opéra that the hostile demonstration developed into actual conflict. This was due to another procession which advanced from the opposite direction. That, too, carried banners with the words, "*Ligue de la Paix*"—"The League of Peace"—but also with provocative words, such as "Death to Militarism," and "Down with Poincaré," and "Capitalism Means War, Communism Means Peace." As afterwards established, this procession was led by Charles Benoist, the professional revolutionary who had been in trouble with the police many times before.

Undoubtedly it was the uninvited adherence of this procession which excited the fury of the Parisians and the activity of the mounted police. The rustic escort of Yvonne Monnier was falsely identified with the destructive policy

of the Benoist group, and suffered from the confusion of leadership. A strong body of the Garde Républicaine came at a trot across the Place de l'Opéra and broke up the ranks of both processions in the usual way, and at the same time there was a wild rush from the mob to seize the banners and assault the "Leaguers."

Some part of the crowd was animated, no doubt, by nothing worse than a spirit of horse-play. But others were in an ugly temper at a time when the nerves of Paris were on edge owing to political passion and uneasiness. A group of young men belonging to a "Royalist" association were particularly violent, and made a concerted attack with sticks on the peasants from St. Pol. They were joined by a gang of *terrassiers*, who used stones as well as sticks.

The peasants, who had come to preach the spirit of peace, were by no means passive in their resistance to this attack, and fought desperately. But they were overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, and several fell bleeding from wounds in the head. One of them, young Fouquet, of Rol-lencourt, was trampled to death by the mob surging over him when he lay stunned.

The *curé* of St. Pol, standing with his back to the cart, raised his crucifix, and with horror and pity in his eyes cried out continually, "Peace! Peace!" until he was carried away by the rush of the crowd.

Jean Berthoult let the reins fall over the horse's neck, and stepping back into the cart put one arm round Yvonne, while his other hand grasped an oak cudgel.

"Courage, mademoiselle," he said, "courage!"

"I am no longer afraid," said Yvonne. "I am only sorry."

She gave a sharp cry and wept a little when she saw young Fouquet go down.

"Courage!" said Jean again.

Once she tried to speak to the crowd, but the uproar was too great for her words to be heard.

"Youth betrays those who died," she said to Jean.

"If only I could reach their heads!" said Jean, swinging his cudgel.

She grasped his hand, and said: "Peace, Jean, peace!"

It was then that a stone struck her full on the temple. Her head fell on to Jean's shoulder, and a little blood spurted on to his face. He felt her go limp on his arm before she fell in a heap. He uttered a cry and knelt over her. It was ten minutes before the Garde Républicaine cleared the crowd away and surrounded the cart where Jean was weeping over the body of Yvonne.

He told me that she spoke to him once again before she died. Perhaps she was not conscious of her words.

"The heart of youth," she said, and then, with her last breath, "Peace."

It was her simple message to France and the world. There are some—among them Jean Berthoult—who remember it in their hearts.

VI: THE CASTLE OF ARNSBERG

ANNA RIPPMMANN went to school with my sister and came to visit us last year—a plump little thing with hair like yellow silk and blue eyes, thoroughly German in appearance and manner, though she had an English mother. I could not get more than a few words from her at first, and a timid smile now and then, until she sat up half a night pouring out her heart and, towards the end of her tale, her tears, and it is in that way that I have gained a curious side light on the assassination of Doctor Mülheim, which was an international sensation when the news came over the wires from Berlin.

The girl was governess at the Schloss, or Castle, of Arnsberg—twenty miles or so from Munich—and had charge of the children of General Baron von Arnsberg. The general had been married three times, and was sixty-eight at the end of the war, in which he will be remembered as one of the corps commanders of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. Three of his sons had been killed in Flanders, but he still had a boy of nineteen—Felix—who had been too young to serve, and a boy and a girl of ten and eight, for whose education Anna had been engaged before the armistice, when they were younger than that.

Anna's first glimpse of Heinrich von Arnsberg was when he motored home from Munich with three of his staff officers. Following the Emperor's flight, the declaration of the Republic and the signing of the armistice, there had been disorderly scenes in the little mining town of Arnsberg, where there was a revolutionary element. Many soldiers belonging to the miners' class had demobilised themselves, looted the barracks and the provision shops, and even attacked some of their officers by tearing off their regimental badges, so that for safety's sake they had to change into

civilian clothes. The new flag of the Republic had been hoisted over the post office, barracks and schoolhouse, but the old imperial flag still drooped over the Siegfried tower of the Schloss by order of the Baroness von Arnsberg, who refused very haughtily to obey the demand of a deputation of ex-soldiers and workmen to haul it down. That flag incident was, perhaps, one reason why a hostile crowd, made up of mining men and their wives, gathered each side of the stone bridge over the little river which ran below the Schloss when a telephone message from Munich informed the townsfolk of Arnsberg that the general was on his way.

On the other hand, there were many people, mostly shopkeepers and farmers, who had no enthusiasm for the new Republic and were still moved by a tradition of loyalty and sentiment to Heinrich von Arnsberg, not only because of his name, which was old in the romance of German history, but because of his own character and reputation. In the war of 1870 he had won honour as a young cavalry officer. In the European War of 1914 to 1918 he had been mentioned in all the dispatches of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria as one of his most trusted generals. Now that he was coming home after the immense unrealisable defeat of the German Army and nation, in spite of victories which had been rung out by the church bells of Arnsberg year after year, there were many people, knowing his pride and his unshakable belief in final victory—until the last smash—who felt pity for the man as they stood waiting for him on the bridge.

The Baroness von Arnsberg, whose eyes bore traces of heavy weeping—she was a tall, stately woman, twenty years younger than her husband, to whom she was devoted in a nervous, timid way—had put on one of her most imposing gowns of black silk and stood at the castle gate above the bridge, with her two small children at her side.

Felix, who was the son of General von Arnsberg's second wife, was close behind her, very pale and excited, thought Anna, the little governess, who glanced at him once or twice until their eyes met. He had just come home from Heidel-

berg University, and so far had not exchanged a word with her beyond a stiff "*Guten Morgen*," or "*Guten Abend*."

From afar they heard the sound of a motor horn as the general's car passed through the narrow streets of Arnsherg and then came into sight where the road curved beyond the stone bridge. The crowd pressed closer to the roadway on the bridge itself, and Anna heard a number of people cheering as the car slowed down a little. But through the cheers another sound broke. It was a hostile demonstration by miners and ex-soldiers.

Above all the other noise one voice rang out with an angry shout: "Down with those who have led Germany to ruin and defeat!"

Quite clearly Anna saw one figure—a tall, broad-shouldered man, who, afterwards she heard, was a mine foreman named Franz Dachs—force his way through the group of women and step close to the general's car as it crawled slowly across the bridge.

The man raised his fist and shouted again: "A curse on those who made the war and lost it!"

General von Arnsherg, who was in full uniform, with a cloth cover on his spiked helmet, was sitting in the open car, looking towards the castle gate and saluting the townsfolk who cheered him. By his side was a young cavalry officer in a sky-blue cloak, and opposite were two other officers of the corps staff.

Anna saw for the first time the heavy figure and massive face—slashed by three sword cuts in his young duelling days—of the home-coming general.

At the insult shouted at him by the man in the crowd his face flushed ruddily. His hand, which had been at the salute, was suddenly clenched, and, leaning sideways out of the car, he struck the fellow a blow full in the face, so that he staggered and dropped like a felled ox. A kind of gasp rose from the crowd, followed by a roar of rage mingled with cheers and laughter.

"*Schweinehund!*" said the general, as the car came to a halt at the castle gateway.

Anna heard him speak the word with a short, guttural

laugh. Then, lightly for so huge a man, he skipped out of the car, raised his hand in salute again, standing stiffly with his heels together, before kissing his wife on both cheeks.

"Welcome home, dear and honoured husband," said the poor lady, white-faced because of the episode at the gate, apart from all other emotion which stirred in her.

The three staff officers stood at a pace to the rear of the general, and the castle servants behind the baroness and her two children were motionless in the presence of their master.

The general glanced for a moment at the imperial flag above the turret, and his eyes moistened and some spasm of emotion twitched his mouth. But he spoke loudly in his harsh, guttural voice, so that all could hear.

"I come back, dear wife, from an army undefeated and ever-glorious in the field of war, but stabbed in the back by the forces of revolution and disorder and cowardice. God save our Kaiser and Fatherland!"

Then he patted the heads of his small boy and girl, kissed Felix—his eldest son, now that three were dead—and presented the staff officers to his wife. The gate of the castle had already been closed, shutting out all view of the crowd, though their voices could still be heard, with cheers and booings in a tumult.

Anna's eyes were fixed on Felix, that boy of nineteen, back from Heidelberg in time for this home-coming. During his father's speech he had stood at attention, but quite unconsciously, perhaps, he gave an almost imperceptible shake of the head, as though disagreeing with that phrase "undefeated in the field of war" and the words that followed about "stabbed in the back." When his father kissed him he blushed up to the roots of his close-cropped hair and looked very boyish and handsome and shy. So Anna thought, as she told us.

That night dinner was laid in the old banqueting hall, which had not been used during the general's absence. In addition to the three staff officers there were about twelve guests, including three of the general's old comrades in arms, veterans, like himself, of the war of 1870, with their

ancient and wrinkled dames, who were their faithful and obedient wives. There were also Count Fritz von Arnheim and his beautiful young wife; the pastor of the Lutheran Church of Arnsberg, with his enormously fat lady; Professor Schwarz, famous in Germany for his great works on German civilisation and world power; with a few other intimate friends.

Little Anna Rippmann had been astounded and not a little frightened at receiving an invitation to join this distinguished company. It came from the general himself, who spoke to her in the corridor at the head of the great stairway as she was slipping away to the nursery to read *Grimm's Fairy Tales* to the two little ones, Rupprecht and Elsa. He was pacing slowly along with his wife, arm in arm, when Anna flattened herself against the panelled wall, wishing that it might open and swallow her.

"Who is that?" he asked in his big gruff voice.

Anna dropped a curtsy in the German way as the baroness spoke her name and explained her position in the house.

"She teaches little Rupprecht and Elsa. She is very kind and good."

"So?"

The general's eyes stared at Anna so that she seemed to dwindle to midget size as he towered above her.

"What do you teach them, *Fräulein*? Reading, writing, music? That is good. But not enough. You must teach them to honour the Kaiser and love the Fatherland, and hate all the enemies who have ruined our country. Teach them to hate, *Fräulein*, lies, and cowards, and treachery, and the swine who have betrayed us from within."

Anna was speechless. She tried desperately to say something, but her lips moved without a sound. There was something terrible to her in the general's reiteration of that word "hate." There had been too much hate in the world, she thought, and it had caused a sum of agony and death that God alone could reckon. She had tried to teach the general's children the spirit of love, not with great success

in little Rupprecht's case. Now this old man demanded an education in hate.

He smiled at her under eyebrows like spiders' legs.

"You will dine with us to-night, *Fräulein*."

Dismay at this command gave her back her speech.

"I have supper with little Rupprecht and Elsa every night. They like me to read to them."

"To-night," said the general, "you will dine with my guests." He turned to his wife and added, "That is so, is it not, dearest heart?"

The Baroness von Arnsberg gave a wintry but not unkindly smile as she glanced at the governess.

"What the general desires is my pleasure also. You will put on your best frock, *Fräulein*?"

"A thousand thanks, *gnädige Frau*!"

In her little white frock she sat at the end of the table, next to the pastor's fat lady and opposite Felix von Arnsberg, who said, "*Guten Abend*," as usual, and then was utterly silent, next to the pastor.

Anna remembered this banquet so that her description was vivid of the great room with its high oak roof and its big portraits of Frederick William the Great, William I of Prussia, Von Moltke, Bismarck, and those who had been Emperor and Empress until their flight to Holland. The room was lighted with electric torches in iron brackets.

At the head of the table the general, still in uniform, and wearing his decorations and Iron Cross, had the Count and Countess von Arnheim on his right and left hand. He drank heavily of red wine, which flushed his massive face and made the three sword cuts livid as though they were recent wounds. He spoke mostly of the war and of his glorious troops, as though victory had been theirs to the end. The retreat had been according to plan. The armistice was forced upon them by the complete breakdown of the home front, due to the cowardice of politicians and the Bolshevism of the civilians. The *moral* of the nation would have to be strengthened again by a relentless struggle

against all revolutionary and destructive influences which had eaten into the strong old German spirit. At all costs, and by all means, traitor politicians like Mülheim and others would have to be destroyed like rats by those who were loyal to the old tradition.

"Thank God," said the pastor of Arnsberg, "we still have lion-hearted defenders of the Fatherland, inspired by the same devotion as yourself, dear and honoured general!"

"Some of us are getting old," said Heinrich von Arnsberg. "These last days of shame have weighed heavily upon those of us who have borne the brunt of the war. The future of Germany is in the hands of youth."

"Our heroic youth is undefeated in spirit," said the pastor. There were murmurs of agreement and emotion from the old ladies, and the beautiful Countess of Arnheim clinked glasses with one of the young staff officers and said, "Youth is loyal." The general gulped down another glass of red wine.

"Gladly have I sacrificed three of my sons on the altar of the Fatherland," he said solemnly. "I have two others whom I consecrate to that service and sacrifice. As the others fought against the enemies from without—the ever-to-be-damned English and French—so now Felix, here, must fight against the enemies from within." He rose in his chair, and, holding up his wineglass as though he would crush it in his great paw, stared over to the boy at the end of the table.

"My son, here before old comrades and friends who remember with me the glory of German victories, here before young men who have had the honour to serve with me in the war, and here under the portraits of our beloved Emperors who were sure of the loyalty of the House of Arnsberg, which is your inheritance, I dedicate you to the service of Kaiser and Fatherland. Hate their enemies. Pledge yourself to destroy those who have betrayed them—our rascally revolutionaries—strengthen yourself to avenge your brothers when the day of vengeance comes. Be glad to die if by giving up your life you can serve in any way our Imperial Family and our good old German pride. Be

strong. Be brave. Be ruthless for the might and right of the German Empire. May the blessing of God be with you in fulfilment of that last pledge. May the curse of God follow you if you weaken in this cause."

This speech, delivered in a strong, guttural voice, which trembled with a violence of emotion, aroused the enthusiasm, and, indeed, the passion of the company. All eyes were turned upon young Felix von Arnsberg.

At the first mention of his name a deep wave of colour mounted to the boy's forehead and then ebbed away, leaving him very pale. Towards the end of the speech, with its solemn dedication, he rose, and then, at the very end, bowed to his father and sat down again without a word.

There were shouts of "*Hoch! Hoch!*" The little old pastor of Arnsberg, with tears in his eyes, raised both his hands in a blessing above the boy's head. The young staff officers smiled at Felix and lifted their glasses to him.

According to Anna Rippmann, the little governess, it was a few moments after that, when the conversation was general again, that Felix raised his eyes from their contemplation of the table-cloth. They met Anna's for a moment, and she thought she read in them an expression of revolt against the paternal dedication. An expression of revolt, yet belonging to a soul trapped and seeking a way of escape.

That is how she described his look, though perhaps she put into that memory of his glance the knowledge which afterwards came to her of his character and views.

It was at least a month after this banquet that Felix broke the silence that had existed—except for that "*Guten Morgen*" and "*Guten Abend*"—between himself and Anna Rippmann. The direct cause of a secret and dangerous intimacy that followed was the influence upon both these young people of a man named Hans Eupen, who came daily to the Castle of Arnsberg to give music lessons to little Rupprecht and Elsa, and violin lessons to Felix, who was remarkably proficient already and played with an emotion which Anna found almost too stirring.

Hans Eupen had conducted the orchestra at the Court Theatre of Munich for some years before the war, and was

a composer of reputation and promise. In the war he lost a leg, and his nerves were so shattered that he was unable to write a line of original music or to hold a baton in public, so that he was reduced to the wretched task of teaching as a means of livelihood.

A tall, dark-eyed, melancholy-looking man, his patience was severely strained by the childish mistakes of Rupprecht and Elsa, who hated their music lessons, and it was out of sheer pity for his agony that Anna—always present during these exercises—engaged him in conversation. At first he was reserved and taciturn, but little by little he revealed a passion that consumed him as though by fire. It was a passionate hatred of war and of the materialism and militarism in all classes of German life, as well as in other nations, which had made the last war inevitable, and would, unless killed by a new faith and a new philosophy in Europe, make the peace that had followed only a breathing time before another monstrous and inevitable conflict.

"We must change the mind of youth," he said. "Unless we stamp out the old traditions of race hatred, military pride and national egotism, European civilisation will perish. All depends upon the teaching of children like that. You have a great responsibility, Miss Rippmann!"

He glanced at Rupprecht and Elsa, perched on their piano stools and struggling with a duet.

It seems strange, perhaps, that he should have talked like that to a little governess, but by some instinct he understood that Anna Rippmann—perhaps because of her English mother—did not hold the narrow views of these German aristocrats whose children he instructed in the rudiments of music. Day after day, in low voices, they talked of these things, and Anna heard much of the agony of the things this man had suffered and seen in war, and of his burning hope that some leader would arise in Germany—he spoke often of Doctor Mülheim—to make the republic safe for German democracy against all monarchist reaction and hopes of military vengeance, and to educate the younger men and women of Germany in ideals of peace based upon the brotherhood of nations.

Dangerous talk in the Castle of Arnsberg! It was interrupted by the "One—two—three—four!" with which Hans Eupen beat time now and then to the children, or by his cries of anguish when they made a jumble of notes. Then he would thrust back the lock of hair which fell over his forehead, take up his music case and leave the room to go up to the high chamber where Felix waited for him.

Never once, at this time, did he speak of Felix to Anna. He was cautious in the Castle of Arnsberg, as far as that went; but by the length of time he stayed upstairs, and by a kind of excitement in the eyes of Felix after his music lessons, Anna was certain that Hans Eupen was trying to convert this young man to his own faith. She held her breath at the thought, remembering that dedication to hate and vengeance, and that curse of God proclaimed by General von Arnsberg should this son of his weaken in his loyalty to the old tradition of his house.

It was Felix himself who revealed the secret of his conversations with the music master. He came into the children's room one day on the pretext of playing a game with little Rupprecht, who was fighting a battle with tin soldiers on the floor, and annihilating imaginary legions of *verdamnte Franzosen*.

"Hans Eupen would hate to see a game like this," said Felix in a shy, self-conscious way.

"It's not a good game," said Anna, "but Rupprecht likes it best of all."

"It's my father's blood in him," replied Felix. "Perhaps our long ancestry of soldiers, who thought of life only in terms of war. An inherited instinct."

"Is it yours?" asked Anna.

"I'm a heretic to the old faith of blood and iron. I believe humanity ought to move on to something higher than tribal hatreds. Otherwise Europe will go down with her civilisation."

"That's what Hans Eupen says."

"Yes. It is Hans Eupen who has converted me, heart and soul, to a democratic philosophy. I stand against all that my father is and believes. Every word he speaks fills

me with revolt. Sometimes I even hate the sight of his sword-slashed face, because it is typical of German brutality. I detest the old men who surround him and flatter him. Above all I abhor the intrigues of the young staff officers who come here day after day, pretending that they won the war; casting the shame of defeat on the poor devils of civilians who starved and delivered up their sons for sacrifice; and plotting against the liberal-minded men who try to strengthen the new republic."

He spoke with astonishing bitterness, and his face was flushed by hurtful emotion.

"Hush!" said Anna. "It is dangerous to speak like that, even before the children."

"Don't you agree with what I say?" he asked. "Hans Eupen tells me you hold the same opinions. That is why I want to talk to you."

After that breaking of the ice, which had frozen all previous intercourse between them, Felix sought out the little governess whenever he could do so without observation from the servants, or his father and mother, or the guests, mostly officers of high military caste, who came over constantly from Munich.

They made a habit of meeting after *Abendessen* in a little summerhouse at the end of the castle grounds. It overlooked the brown old roofs of the tower of Arnsberg, with a glimpse of the river, which curved like a Turkish sword between the leafy gardens and flat meadows. Very sweetly at this hour the sound of the church bells, ringing for evensong, came up to them from the valley, and often the western sky was a wonder of red and gold as the sun went down behind the hills.

Here the son of Heinrich von Arnsberg and the little governess, who was so insignificant a member of his household, spoke together and of many great and serious subjects, like the meaning of life, and the mystery of God, and the future of civilisation, and the chances of world peace, and the inevitable ruin of Germany. Anna was impressed by the nobility of this boy's mind, his sensitive temperament and love of beauty; but she was aware—even in her adoration—

of a strain of weakness in him. He hated his father's ideas, but was afraid of him. He confessed his own cowardice and his utter inability to stand up to the old man and challenge his opinions, his traditions, or his political creed.

"I'm a moral liar," he said. "My father thinks I'm loyal to his hatreds and hopes of vengeance, when I am utterly disloyal. He takes my silence for agreement and endorsement. But when he roars out his denunciations of Doctor Mülheim and all the men who stand for a liberal and peaceful Germany I haven't the spirit to challenge him. He leaves me dazed and deafened by his noise and fury. Also, strange as it may seem, I hate to hurt him. He puts a spell on me."

The spell was broken, and the challenge made between father and son, before many weeks had passed. But before then Felix and Anna had changed the subject of their conversation. It was no longer abstract politics, but the mystery and wonder of personal love which engrossed them. Inevitable, perhaps, that a boy like that, imaginative, unhappy because of a wide gulf between himself and his parents in all views of life, and intensely sentimental, should find a passionate solace in the companionship and understanding of a pretty girl like Anna Rippmann. Equally inevitable, according to the laws of human nature, that his romantic expression of love should meet with a ready response.

They took tremendous risks of discovery by meeting so often, clasping hands in shady nooks, stealing away to uninhabited rooms of the old Schloss, embracing each other outside the very doors that divided them from the general and his wife. Often they were within a hair's breadth of being discovered.

Once, when Felix had his arms about Anna and her head was upon his shoulder, in a room known as the armoury, in a high turret, where old weapons rusted on the walls and moths devoured the fur of stuffed animals, they were startled by a heavy footstep on the creaking floor outside. A loud, panting breath and a deep husky cough warned

them that Heinrich von Arnsberg himself was within a yard of them. It was dusk, and the room was almost in darkness except for a faint twilight creeping through the barred windows. They drew back breathlessly into the far corner of the room, behind a mangy old bear shot by the general in his youth. The old man strode into the room and struck a match. He stood so close to Felix and Anna that they gave themselves up for lost. Anna could feel the rigidity of Felix as he stood there still clasping her. A sudden breath of air blew the match out, and the general cursed loudly, fumbled for another match, failed to find it, and then stumbled out of the room again and passed down the corridor.

At another time it was the Baroness von Arnsberg who nearly caught them. That was outside Anna's room late at night. Felix was whispering to her and begging for another kiss. Suddenly the clear, rather shrill voice of the boy's mother called at the head of the stairs, "*Fräulein!*"

Anna slipped in front of Felix, holding her door open to hide him.

"*Gnädige Frau?*"

It seemed that little Elsa had been walking in her sleep and had gone into her mother's room. Now she was awake and frightened and calling for Anna. By another footstep the lady would have found her son behind the *Fräulein's* door.

"Our love is very dangerous," said Anna more than once. "It can lead to nothing but disgrace and tragedy."

The boy said that this love was his only happiness. Yet he admitted that it was impossible for him to tell his parents. The general would kick him out, and he had no money beyond a meagre allowance. He would have to earn his livelihood, enough for marriage. Perhaps he could get a job in Berlin. Hans Eupen would introduce him to Doctor Mülheim, who owned the only newspaper which told the truth and worked for peace. It was possible he might be engaged as a writer.

"If you joined Doctor Mülheim," said Anna, "your father

would never forgive you. He hates him as the arch enemy of Germany."

"He is the noblest man we have," said Felix, "and Hans Eupen worships him as the leader of the new democracy."

Because Hans Eupen, the lame music master, worshipped this Doctor Mülheim, it was enough for Felix to indulge in hero worship. For the boy listened to the crippled man as to one divinely inspired; and, indeed, from all I hear, this strange, melancholy and passionate soul had a fine and spiritual outlook, rare, perhaps, in Germany at that time—rare everywhere, and at all times.

His friendship with Doctor Mülheim, great industrialist, newspaper proprietor and leader of the moderate democratic group in the Reichstag, was, strangely enough, the direct cause of the explosion that happened in the Castle of Arnsberg, breaking, among other things more massive, the heart of Anna Rippmann, the little governess. For there is no doubt that it was by the invitation of Hans Eupen that Doctor Mülheim was persuaded to come to the town of Arnsberg and address a meeting of miners and ex-soldiers pledged to pacifist principles and democratic ideals. Their leader was Franz Dachs, that tall burly fellow who had been knocked down on the bridge below the Schloss by the home-coming general, and it is certain now that Hans Eupen was in close correspondence with him, and, as it were, his intellectual guide.

This visit of Doctor Mülheim to Arnsberg, and, above all, the report of his speech, which was written by Hans Eupen for the local press, created a sensation which ended, as all the world knows, in crime and tragedy. The speech was certainly rash and ill-advised. Doctor Mülheim was not content with proclaiming his faith in democratic principles, and with denouncing the intrigues and reactionary policy of German monarchists and militarists, but he made a direct and personal attack upon General von Arnsberg as a type of all that was evil in the militarist caste.

"Here, above this little town," he said, "with its population of humble men who toil for poor wages in the mines,

the victims of war, and those who pay the costs of defeat, there frowns down one of those old German castles which still typify the arrogant pride of brute force. In their time they were necessary and useful; in that time when the world was a conflict between primitive opposing forces, and before the dawn of civilised ideas leading to the right of humble folk who desire to work in peace without quarrel with their fellow men. Now these old stones and the old men who dwell within them are anachronisms. They belong to the past. They have no place in the present. They are doomed by the future. Heinrich von Arnsberg, one of those generals who made the war and lost it, gathers round him the old caste, plots with them against the new republic, rages against the march of human progress, and by appealing to old sentiment—by which we, as a people, are too spellbound—endeavours to inflame young aristocrats with the spirit of his senseless hate and hopes of vengeance. It is he and his class who have brought Germany to ruin, massacred her youth and made us pariahs among the peoples of the world. The working youth of Germany must overwhelm them by the passion of their purpose for peace."

The mere fact that Mülheim was in Arnsberg was a cause of violent anger to the general. At dinner that night, before the fatal speech was made, he drank heavily, and after the ladies had left the table he broke out into noisy tirades against a man whom he declared to be a traitor and a pig-dog.

To two young officers who were dining with him he deplored the departure of the old duelling days, which would have enabled him to kill the fellow and so rid his country of a pest.

"If I were twenty years younger," he said, bringing his fist down with a crash on the oak table, "I would kill him like a rat."

"If he were twenty years younger," said one of the officers—Franz von Westhof—"I should have great pleasure in slitting his throat for you, general. Unfortunately, he has white hair and cannot defend himself."

"Old age is no excuse for treason," said another young

man—Friedrich von Rothwasser. "I agree with the general. Rats should be killed, old or young."

Sinister words, in view of what happened the following night, when Doctor Mülheim's speech had been reported in the local press. Felix was in his father's library, after dinner, when the evening paper was brought in by one of the servants, who held it as though it might bite him. Franz von Westhof and Friedrich von Rothwasser, who were staying in the castle, were sitting back in the deep leather chairs, smoking cigars and discussing the Treaty of Versailles with complete unanimity regarding its iniquity. Felix was sitting with his eyes closed thinking of Anna and wondering how soon he could steal away to her. Suddenly there was a strange, terrible and apoplectic noise from his father's chair. The old man seemed to be suffocating in a storm of rage. When it abated he delivered a series of terrific oaths, kicked a footstool to the end of the room, flung his glass of brandy into the great fireplace and raged up and down, calling upon ten thousand devils and other agencies of an infernal character.

The two young officers sprang to their feet at the first outbreak of his violent demonstration and became aware of the cause of it when they picked up the paper, which the general had dropped on the tiger-skin rug, and read Doctor Mülheim's oration.

"Undoubtedly it is an outrage," said Freidrich von Rothwasser when he had read the offending print.

"It is a gross insult, not only to General von Arnsberg, but to all of us," said Franz von Westhof.

The general again called upon heaven and hell to avenge him against such infamy.

It was Franz von Westhof, according to what Felix told Anna, who brought silence into the room by an action which startled this company of men.

Very slowly and deliberately he went to the general's desk, took a sheet of notepaper and tore it into three strips of unequal length, which he then held so that only the ends appeared in his hand.

"There are three of us here to avenge the general and rid

Germany of a traitor," he said in his quiet, aristocratic voice. "Whoever draws the short piece will kill this ruffian Mülheim. If I am left with the short piece, it is, of course, my privilege."

He held out his hand to Friedrich von Rothwasser and said, "Draw, my dear friend!"

The young officer said "*Bestimmt!*"—"Agreed!"—and drew one of the bits of paper.

Felix, conscious of intense pallor and a sensation of sickness, drew another. Franz von Westhof held the last in his hand and measured it against the two others.

He bowed slightly to Felix and smiled.

"You have the honour, Felix. It is right that a son should avenge his father."

Heinrich von Arnsberg had watched this pantomime with a flushed face and heavy shadows under his puffed eyes. He gave a gruff, gurgling laugh.

"I do not understand what you young men are playing at—*Gott im Himmel!*—but I do not interfere. If there is one scoundrel less in Germany I shall rejoice. If my son is a brave man, true to his family name and his love of the Fatherland, I shall be proud of him." He put his great hand on his son's shoulder and laughed again. "Good hunting, my son!"

Felix fell back a little, and then straightened himself up and faced his father. He knew that he must tell the truth that was in him or be forever a false and craven thing. A slight sweat broke out on his forehead and his pallor was extreme, but his eyes were burning.

"I am not a murderer," he said huskily. "Even if I had inherited instincts of that kind, Doctor Mülheim is the last man on God's earth I would choose for my killing. He spoke hard words against the family of Arnsberg, and of you, father, but can you wonder at it? Is it not true what he said? Ever since the armistice you have put the blame of defeat on the poor people who suffered its worst agonies, and now pay, in their bodies and souls, for the ruin into which they were led. For months this house has been the meeting place of old men—yes, and young men too"—he

glanced savagely at Friedrich von Rothwasser and Westhof—"who have no other policy than that of plotting against the republic, bringing back the monarchy, and preparing by every kind of villainy a new war, in which they may have a gambler's chance of victory. Doctor Mülheim calls to German youth to have done with military pride and the philosophy of brute force. He holds up new and nobler ideals for the German race, in which I, for one, believe. I regret his personal attack on you, sir, but I understand his bitterness. The proof of all he said is in this slip of paper, which is a warrant for murder. Not by my hand!"

He twisted his slip of paper into a pellet and flicked it into the fire of logs burning in the great hearth.

For the second time that night General von Arnsberg made strange, ugly and inarticulate noises in his throat. He breathed loudly, and the little veins on his face swelled, and the old sword cuts were vivid.

For some time he seemed unable to speak, and a painful silence was broken only by a light, mocking laugh from Friedrich von Rothwasser. Then the old man uttered a frightful oath, followed by an outburst of incoherent abuse of his son who allied himself with swine—so he spoke—against his own father and his own caste. Traitor, coward, liar, Bolshevik, were only a few of the names he hurled at Felix. There were times when he moved forward, in a hunched, bearlike way, with clenched fists, as though he would smash the boy with sledge-hammer blows, but he did not strike him.

The end of this scene was when he pulled a silken rope hanging at the chimneyside and set a bell loudly jangling. Several menservants came rushing in, believing that some one had been killed or that a fire had broken out. They were all men who had served the general in his headquarters staff during the war.

He shouted to them in a furious voice, "Take that young *Schweinehund* away! Lock him up in the armoury. Put a guard on the door, and keep him a close prisoner."

They were astounded and hesitated to close round Felix, who had always been very civil to them. But he walked

towards them with a white smile and said, "I am in your hands."

He went with them up to the armoury, where he had embraced Anna on that night when they had nearly been discovered. With many apologies and expressions of dismay and regret the servants shut him in and locked the door.

He was there not longer than an hour, sitting on a wooden box beside the mangy old bear that his father had shot, with his head in his hands, in the darkness which was hardly brightened by a candle which one of the servants had placed on the table.

Once the room was lit up by the headlights of a motor car which drove away from the castle.

After that hour Felix blew out the candle and went to the casement window. The servants had not troubled to lock it, and it was an easy thing for his slim figure to get through and grasp the twisted ivy on the wall outside, with his foot on the drip stone. By means of a leaden drain pipe he climbed down the wall and jumped lightly to the ground.

Then he walked round to the tower where Anna Rippmann had her room. Her window was black. She was in bed and asleep. But he played the trick which millions of lovers have done throughout the centuries. A small pebble, breaking her windowpane, awakened her. A light shone through the leaded panes. She had lit a candle.

In her white nightgown she came to the window and called out "Who is there?"

He answered softly, "It is I—Felix."

Holding to the ivy, and raising himself a little from the ground, he whispered to her something of what had happened—the murder plot against Doctor Mülheim, his refusal and revelation, his father's fury, his imprisonment in the armoury, his escape.

"*Es ist schrecklich!*" said Anna. "It is terrible! What can you do, dear Felix?"

He told her that he was going to Hans Eupen's house and after that, perhaps, to Berlin.

"Think of me always!" said Anna, weeping in her sentimental way as she confessed.

"I leave my heart with you," he answered, and for a little while they spoke as lovers do at such a time, agonising over the parting, protracting it, swearing eternal things. It was the girl, as always, who bade him go at last. They were too far away to kiss. He couldn't even touch her hands. They blew kisses to each other on their finger tips like children, and then, unwilling, deeply miserable, Felix von Arnsberg said "*Auf Wiedersehen*," and disappeared into the darkness of the pathway between high bushes which led to a side gate, and so out of the castle grounds.

Hans Eupen's house was in the Friedrich Wilhelmstrasse, at the southern end of the town of Arnsberg. There were lights in the windows when Felix approached, and he found a crowd of people round the open doorway vastly excited. Felix pushed his way through them and in the small, square-built hall, found Hans Eupen and Dr. Ernest Hardmuth, of Arnsberg, bending over a body which lay there on the floor. It was the dead body of Doctor Mülheim, who had been shot by two men as he was entering Hans Eupen's house on his way from a meeting of miners in the *Arbeitsverein*. The murderers had driven away in a motor car with powerful headlights.

Hans Eupen was so nerve-shattered by the sudden tragedy that he seemed dazed and horror-stricken, and for several minutes failed to recognise Felix. Over and over again he groaned out, "My poor and noble friend!" The lock of hair on his forehead fell over his eyes and he did not take the trouble to thrust it back. Afterwards, when he had collected his wits a little, and when the body of Doctor Mülheim was taken away by the police, he led Felix into his sitting room and there broke out into a passion of rage against the unknown murderers who had done to death the noblest man, he said, in Germany.

Felix dared not tell him the whole truth about the scene in his father's library. Indeed, he said nothing at all about the slips of paper or the direct cause of the quarrel that had

happened with his father, but spoke only of having challenged the old man's political views in a way that had led to his arrest and escape.

So he told Anna at their next meeting, which happened that afternoon when she came down to Hans Eupen's house for half an hour, having left the children in charge of the *Mädchen*. It was while she was alone with Felix, clasping his hand and talking anxiously of the future, that Hans Eupen learned, beyond all doubt, the names of the men who had murdered his dearest friend. One of those menservants who had escorted Felix to the armoury had identified the description of the car in which the murderers had escaped with the one belonging to Count Friedrich von Rothwasser, while Franz von Westhof and this officer had left the Schloss at twenty minutes past eleven on the preceding evening and had returned at twenty minutes before midnight. The servant brought the information to Hans Eupen under pledge of secrecy and confessed his hatred of the general, who would kick him to death did he know of this betrayal.

Like a demented man, Hans Eupen broke into the room where Felix sat with Anna and blurted out this news with a violence of language that was unusual with him.

"Never again do I set foot in that house of assassins!" he said. "I shall curse myself forever for having taken money from those who planned my poor friend's death. By God's help I will bring his murderers to justice.

"Germany will not be safe for democracy until every stone in these castles of brutality is hurled to the ground!"

For a time he raged even against Felix because he bore the name of Arnsberg. He would have turned him out of his house, but the boy's distress, and Anna's pleadings, and his real affection for the lad, who had no sympathy with his own caste, softened him, so that he reproached himself for senseless words and begged Felix to pardon him.

The rest of this story, and the end of it, must be told from what Anna Rippmann saw and heard on the following evening in the Schloss, to which she had returned after another farewell with Felix, who had arranged to stay with Hans Eupen that night.

At dinner the general sat moody and silent, and the Baroness von Arnsberg had certainly been weeping because of the departure of Felix, whom, in her cold, austere way, she loved. It is improbable, I think, that her husband had revealed the full story of that scene in which Felix had affronted him, or any word of its reference to Doctor Mülheim. Both Franz von Westhof and Friedrich von Rothwasser were gay and smiling. Anna Rippmann, watching them with a kind of horrified fascination, marvelled at their ease of mind after such a crime. They chatted amiably, cracked nuts when dessert was served, drank their wine with courteous salutations to their host.

It was just then, when the fruit had been placed on the table, that a strange noise came through the open windows. It was rather like a heavy sea breaking on distant rocks or a howling wind down a ravine.

It was Friedrich von Rothwasser who first called attention to this noise.

"A storm rising?" he asked lightly, and then with a slight change of tone, after listening intently: "Or vulgar clamour at the gates?"

"Certainly the noise of a mob," said Franz von Westhof.

The general rose and went to the window and stood listening.

"Those damned Bolshevik miners," he said presently. "They are trying to smash down the outer gate. Ten thousand devils!"

Franz von Westhof looked at his friend across the table. A slightly heightened colour seemed to reveal some sudden emotion, but he laughed lightly.

"They seem annoyed," he said. "They are certainly using abominable language, as usual!"

Friedrich von Rothwasser rose from the table.

"Perhaps we had better prepare for a little trouble," he suggested. "Do you permit me to get my revolver, general? And yours? They may be needed."

He glanced in a smiling, courteous way at the Baroness von Arnsberg, and his eyes travelled round for a moment to Anna Rippmann.

"The ladies, perhaps, should retire to the farther rooms—in the Siegfried tower. It would be safer in case of—unpleasant disturbance."

"Do you mean the people are attacking us?" asked the Baroness von Arnsberg. "I cannot think they would dare——"

She breathed sharply and put her hand to her heart.

In another moment there was no doubt that ugly things might happen and were happening.

A great crash sounded down the avenue leading to the outer gate by the stone bridge. It was followed by an uproar in which separate voices, shouting fiercely, could be clearly heard. Then came the sound of tramping feet, the noise of an excited mob coming closer. Ruddy points of light glowed through the heavy foliage which surrounded the broad walk round the Schloss.

"Torches," said Franz von Westhof.

A groom hurried into the dining room without ceremony. He was panting and wild-eyed.

"They are asking for the Count von Westhof and the Baron von Rothwasser," he stammered.

"Unless they are delivered up, they threaten to burn the Schloss. They are mad with rage."

"You are mad with cowardice!" said the general harshly. "Call the other servants and tell them to bring their arms. Send the *Feldwebel* to me. He keeps his head."

He turned to his wife and told her to go to the Siegfried tower and not to be afraid.

"I should be more afraid alone in the Siegfried tower," said the lady. "I beg of you to let me stay with you."

"As you will," said the general. "There is no danger. I will teach these pig-dogs a lesson."

Anna Rippmann was certainly afraid. Telling the story afterwards, she confessed that terror took all the strength from her limbs. She sank into a chair. She remembers that she felt very cold and that by some queer freak of mind she kept repeating to herself a nursery rhyme in English which she had taught the children. She could not remember the

last line. Try as she would she couldn't remember those last foolish words:

"When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing——"

How did it go then?

It was, of course, one of the symptoms of a fear so strong that it numbs the brain.

Many details of what happened made no kind of impression on her mind. Vaguely she remembers a number of men-servants assembling with arms and stuffing up the windows with cushions. Afterwards they went out, under the general's orders presumably, to other rooms in the Schloss. More clearly, as a vivid flash of light illumines darkness for a moment, she remembers the first shot that came into the room. It pierced a wooden shutter and shattered a gold-framed mirror on the other side of the room.

Friedrich von Rothwasser and Franz von Westhof leaned up against the walls at an angle by the window frames and every now and then fired their revolvers. They were perfectly calm. They seemed to be amused.

The general sat for a few moments, she believes, in a heavy oak chair, with an automatic pistol which he fired carelessly through the window now and then. But he seems to have moved about afterwards, and was absent from the dining room for what seemed long periods of time. No doubt he was ordering the defence of the Schloss elsewhere. The Baroness von Arnsberg also disappeared. Anna Rippmann believes that she herself was entirely forgotten and unnoticed for a time, as she sat back helpless with fear in a corner of the room. She remembers the noise of great shouting which went on outside continually except when, for a moment now and then, sudden short silences followed a pistol shot from the room.

A scrap of conversation between the two young men in the room came back to her mind, as people remember bits of a nightmare.

"They will certainly break in," said Friedrich von Rothwasser. "There are many of them."

"They won't be kind to us," said Franz von Westhof. He laughed in his rather girlish way.

Friedrich von Rothwasser spoke again:

"It is that swinish young coward Felix who has given us away."

Another shot came into the room. It smashed, very neatly, a tall Dresden vase standing on a table close to the chair in which Anna Rippmann was crouching. At the same time, she believes, a hot, eye-smarting smoke began to filter into the room, and one of the young men uttered a sharp exclamation as a little red flame darted suddenly, like a tongue, through one of the window sashes.

After that the girl seems to have fainted, for the next thing she remembers is lying on the damp grass of one of the lawns outside the Schloss, one wing of which was a blazing fire. As she afterwards learned, she had been carried out by one of the servants, under orders from Friedrich von Rothwasser. He had stayed, retreating to another room, with his companion and the general. The baroness had escaped at the rear with her women-folk, from whom Anna Rippmann afterwards learned the details of their flight. It was only by the reiterated commands of the general that the poor lady had consented to leave the Schloss, and then in a fainting state, so that her women had almost to carry her.

Anna, sitting upon the damp grass, found herself amidst a small group of men, among whom were Hans Eupen, the music master, Franz Dachs, the miners' foreman, and Felix, her lover. Behind them, under the shelter of the trees, were many other men. Felix was staring towards the burning Schloss.

Anna called to him twice, but he did not answer her. He spoke excitedly to Hans Eupen and Franz Dachs:

"At least they should have a chance to surrender. I cannot stand here and see my father burned to death."

"It's as good as being torn to bits," said the foreman harshly.

"Are you all savages?" asked Felix in an agonised voice. "Is this your democratic idealism?"

"We have no mercy for the murderers of Doctor Mülheim," said the man. "You be quiet, young man. We don't like your family name."

Hans Eupen spoke hurriedly to the miners' foreman, but Anna Rippmann could not hear his words. They seemed to have some influence, for after a conversation ending with a shrug of the shoulders, Franz Dachs gave a shout to some of his men, and a sharp order.

They fell back on both sides and made an open way for Felix, who walked rapidly out of the shelter of the trees into the open pathway, which was lurid with the light from the great flames which consumed one wing of the Schloss. Anna called his name again, but it was lost in the roar of that devastating fire. She could see the boy's figure clearly outlined in the ruddy glare towards which he hurried.

He turned a little to the left, towards the Siegfried tower, which was still beyond the reach of the flames, though showers of sparks were blowing this way, so that it was in imminent danger. Then he stood still and waved a white handkerchief and shouted some words. Anna Rippmann did not hear them, but there are others who say that in a loud voice he begged his father to come out of the burning building with his supporters. The men's leaders promised them a safe-conduct if they would surrender. I doubt if he made such a long speech as that. Others say the boy shouted the two words, "Surrender!" and "Safe-conduct!"

There was no surrender from General von Arnsberg, nor from two officers and five men who remained, dead or alive, within the burning Schloss.

The figure of Felix von Arnsberg, tall and slight, with a red glare of light about him, suddenly fell, face forward, and lay huddled on the gravel path.

A shout of rage rose from the men around Anna Rippmann, and Hans Eupen ran forward a few paces and then flung up his arms with a great cry of anguish.

The townsfolk believe that it was the general who shot his son, for the old man's body was nearest to the windows in the Siegfried tower when they explored its charred ruin after the fire had burned out. Franz von Westhof had been killed by a bullet, and Friedrich von Rothwasser, with a handkerchief tied round his mouth and nose, had been crushed by a falling beam.

The Schloss von Arnsberg is a blackened ruin above the little stone bridge and the winding river.

Doctor Mülheim's death was avenged. German democrats scored up a victory against the military caste and the hated Right. But Anna Rippmann, an insignificant little governess, who told this story to my sister, still weeps for a boy who stood between the two extremes.

VII: THE HOUSE WITH THE SPARE BEDROOMS

JOHN LONGHURST had finished breakfast alone—a little melancholy man in a large, cheerful room looking out to a sunlit garden. He had also read the leading articles in *The Times*—one of them dealt with the painful and unsolved problem of “What to Do with Our Sons”—before any other member of the household condescended to join him.

It usually happened like that when John took a day’s leave from his government office and so could study the morning habits of his family and friends.

This time it was his brother-in-law, William—commonly known as Uncle Will—who was the first to appear. He was still in his dressing gown and pyjamas, though by a glance at the clock John saw that it was a quarter to ten.

As usual, Uncle Will was in a cheerful and healthy mood. His big, jovial, hairless face showed no sign of life’s wear and tear except that the skin beneath his eyes was a trifle puffed. He came into the room whistling a bit of ragtime, said “Morning, John!” and then served himself to a large plateful of sausages and bacon with an appetite unaffected by the undoubted fact that he had gone to bed in a state of hilarious intoxication at two in the morning. Undoubted, that is, by John Longhurst, who, lying awake and utterly unable to sleep because of anxious thoughts, had heard him singing and laughing down the corridor.

Cyril—John’s son—had been with him, laughing too, until both were close to the bedroom door. Then the boy had said, “Hush, nunky, don’t wake up the governor!”

After that there had been an explosive laugh, half suppressed, and the noise of two figures slinking past the door

until they reached the other end of the corridor, when there was more buffoonery, a scuffle, and at last silence.

Probably Cyril had been drinking too. Regardless of his young wife, who had gone to bed hours before, and of his father's pleading request that they should turn out the lights before midnight, he had sat up listening to his uncle's yarns—dangerously Rabelaisian for the most part—with intermittent sallies on the piano, noisy choruses, a violin solo by Edward Jermyn, to Uncle Will's accompaniment, then more talk, passionate arguments, gusts of laughter, horseplay, an overturned chair, a vase smashed, a scrimmage in the hall, a drunken and highly comical oration by Uncle Will to the suit of armour on the first landing, and that scene in the corridor.

John Longhurst had no need of imagination to conjure up what had happened. He was perfectly familiar with the progressive hilarity of those evenings in the billiard room. He could quite understand the fascination they held for his son, Cyril. He remembered the time, six months ago, when he, too, had laughed as heartily at Uncle Will's comic genius, and listened with breathless interest to his brother-in-law's reminiscences of the South African War, gold digging in Johannesburg, farming in Alberta, big-game hunting in the Rockies, saloon keeping in New York.

He had not been in the least grudging of hospitality to his wife's brother. He had extended an indefinite invitation to him to stay at Longhurst Hall until he decided to return to Canada as soon as he could get a good position out there.

Certainly, as John had admitted to his wife, it would be a churlish thing to deny board and lodging to a relative who had served the old mother country in two wars—the South African when he was a boy of twenty, and the Great War fifteen years after—and who now for a little while was at a loose end. Common decency demanded that much of John, who had had the luck to survive the years of death between 1914 and 1919, and who had inherited an old country house from a distant cousin who had not survived.

"It's providential," Mrs. Longhurst had said. "The dear

old house comes to us just at this time, when we have to do what we can for our flesh and blood."

"For those who have served England," John had answered with emotion.

"Thank God, darling," his wife had said at another time, "we shan't be selfish in our new possession, great as the joy of it is to us."

Undoubtedly it had been a joy to move from the stucco-fronted villa in the shabby-genteel end of London to this little old manor house in Sussex, with its ten acres of gardens, its stables and outhouses, orchards and mill stream.

After the war it was like heaven's peace to stroll hand in hand with a loving wife between the clipped hedges and over the velvet lawns of this old English homestead, to watch the peaches ripening on the high walls that closed it in, and to sit in the window seats of panelled rooms under oak beams that had sheltered the old stock of the Longhurst family for three centuries. It was not a great mansion—nothing more than a little old manor house, badly in need of repair, and sadly neglected for many years—but it was big enough for John's family, with rooms to spare. Expensive enough, too, because no fortune had come with it, and taxes were terrific in post-war England.

"The upkeep will ruin us, my dear," John had told his wife; but his heart had yearned for the place, and he had not contradicted his wife's assurance that, with economy, they could manage.

It was, of course, fortunate—providential, as Mrs. Longhurst had said—that there should be room enough for Cyril and his young wife. The boy had been rash enough to make one of the many war marriages—without a bean beyond his army pay, as he had said. Well, his father could not blame him for that. In wartime, Youth—with grisly sacrifice ahead—had a right to grab at life while there was time, and Barbara was a nice girl, and adorably pretty. Not very staid and discreet yet, but affectionate and gay and lovable.

"Of course you will live with us, my dear, until you can find some work," said Mrs. Longhurst, when the boy was

demobilised and rushed home from Cologne to Barbara's arms. "The old house is big enough."

"And absolutely topping," said Cyril. "Barbara and I will revel in it until I get a job and set up my own place."

Mrs. Longhurst, loving mother as she was, hoped that would not be too soon.

"It'll take some months to look around and get used to civil life," the boy had said. "Heaps of time!"

So Cyril and Barbara had been given house room; and after that Uncle Will had arrived, with golf clubs, fishing rods, and a set of guns for a week or two, before getting back to Canada, where, undoubtedly, a job would turn up.

That was nineteen months ago.

Edward Jermyn became a guest a month after the arrival of Uncle Will. It was a real joy to John to give a temporary billet to this delightful, whimsical, talented creature. It was also a sacred duty, he thought. Jermyn had saved Longhurst's life at the risk of his own in the trenches, near Thiepval, on the Somme, thereby gaining his D.S.O.

No two men were more dissimilar, except in the one similarity of being hopelessly unfitted by training and temperament for soldiering. They had found themselves together as temporary officers in the Sportsmen's Battalion sent out to France with the Second Division. They had laughed together at the jest of life which had flung men like themselves into this fantastic experience of filth and frightfulness—John Longhurst, a little, middle-aged civil servant in the Board of Education, who had worn a black coat and topper, weekdays and Sundays, for twenty years; and the Honourable Edward Jermyn, of Eton and Magdalen, forty-two years of age, writer of sonnets, violinist, amateur painter, dandy and dilettante. What were they doing in this war, in verminous billets, in water-logged dugouts, in the shambles of the front-line trenches?

Jermyn's unflinching good spirits, his charming manners in the worst possible situations, his highfaluting talk of art and beauty at a time when both were outraged by war's brutality, his dandyism, even in the mud and slime of Flanders, and his debonair defiance of death even when he was

most frightened, as all men were, comforted John Longhurst exceedingly, and taught him the gift and grace of laughter as the only safeguard against life's abominations.

Then there was that time when Jermyn had saved his life out beyond the barbed wire.

After the war they met in Piccadilly, and Jermyn looked exquisite in a brand-new morning suit with white waistcoat and spats, and a silk hat at the old rakish angle. He greeted Longhurst effusively.

"My dear old lad! How perfectly splendid to see you again! And a thousand congratulations! I hear you have inherited a fortune and an old mansion. I insist on being invited down for the week-end."

John explained hurriedly that, so far from inheriting a fortune, he was back again at the Board of Education on a meagre salary none too big for his present needs. As for his mansion, it was certainly old—and ramshackle—but it was costly to keep up, and almost beyond his means. Only sentiment made him cling to it at a time when most people were selling their old houses and estates. But there it was, and it was for him to insist upon Jermyn coming down, not only for a week-end, but for several weeks at least. Nothing would give him greater joy than to share his billet with the man who had saved his life and been his best comrade in time of war.

He spoke with emotion, being incurable as a sentimentalist, and Jermyn was touched by the warmth of his invitation.

"Immensely good of you, old John! I'll certainly come. The truth is that, although I look pretty prosperous at the moment—I've been paying a call on the Duchess of Banstead—I'm at a very loose end indeed, and living entirely on expectations."

He explained that he hoped to make a bit by writing poetry and painting pot-boilers. The idea of a week or two in John's house appealed to him vastly.

"A quiet country life, the beauty of Nature, the song of the birds—Lord! I'll turn out sunsets by the yard and paint no end of giddy masterpieces! How about next week-end?"

That was eighteen months ago. It was only during the last few weeks that John had decided to put a time limit to his hospitality. Indeed, it was only at the breakfast table this very morning, when he sat alone reading the leading articles in *The Times*, before Uncle Will came down with his hearty appetite, that John was conscious of a very desperate purpose within him to get rid of Uncle Will, to thrust out Edward Jermyn, and to insist that Cyril should get a job, earn his own living like a man, and keep his wife in an honest way.

Perhaps it was the way in which Uncle Will absorbed huge quantities of sausages and bacon after his intoxication on the preceding night which put the final spark to the long-smouldering revolt in the spirit of John Longhurst. It was like some trivial annoyance of manner—a way of sneezing, a careless use of the toothpick, an irritating disregard of small courtesies—which sometimes breaks the last strand in the relations between husband and wife and leads to the divorce court.

"I fail to understand how you eat so much breakfast after a drunken orgy," said John, glaring at his wife's brother. "And, anyhow, I wish to God you wouldn't come down in your pyjamas."

Never before had he spoken with such violence, and he was conscious of a rush of blood to the brain.

Uncle Will was surprised. He lifted his eyebrows, and his big, rather flabby face flushed a trifle. But he helped himself calmly and amiably to another sausage.

"You're hipped, John! What's the matter with my pyjamas? And what do you mean by 'drunken orgy'?"

"I mean what I say," said John, with less violence, but an inburning flame of anger. "Night after night you drink yourself fuddled—on my whisky. What is worse, you are corrupting Cyril by your bad example and risky stories."

Uncle Will laughed in his good-natured, hearty way, and poured himself out another cup of coffee.

"My dear old John, surely you don't accuse me—me of all men!—of not being able to drink like a gentleman! As for my stories—young Cyril is a married man and no longer a

child. My little yarns are nothing to what he heard in the trenches."

"I object to them," said John sternly.

"You used to find them amusing, old boy!"

"I object to the demoralising life that is taking possession of this house," said John. "There's nothing but idleness, lounging about, futility."

Uncle Will protested against the accusation of idleness. Only yesterday he had mowed the lawn, marked out the tennis court, mended a broken lock on the woodshed, caught three excellent perch for lunch, shot some rabbits for the family pot, and cut down a tree that would make good logs for winter fires. He was never idle. Canadian life had made him a handy man.

"Isn't it about time you went back to Canada?" asked John. "You can't live here forever, you know."

"God forbid!" said Uncle Will, showing a touch of temper for the first time. "Of course if you begrudge me house room in this old barn——"

"I haven't begrudged it," said John; "but for your own sake you ought to be going now. Time is slipping away, and you have no prospects over here."

"I'm expecting the mail in to-morrow," said Uncle Will, forgetful that for eighteen months it was always the next mail that was to bring him news of a good post. "My Canadian pals aren't going to let me down, whoever else does."

John felt the sting of those last words. But it was less hurtful than it would have been some months ago, before his sentimentality had been overstrained.

"I don't want to let you down," he answered fretfully. "But I'm getting anxious about this prolonged idleness. Not only yours, but Ned Jermyn's and Cyril's. Every one must get some kind of a job in life."

"We didn't shirk it when England had need of us," said Uncle Will with a noble dignity.

He looked down at his right leg, which had been punctured once by a German machine-gun bullet. Then he got up from the table and took half a slice of bread and crumbled it out-

side the window for the birds, whistling cheerfully to his feathered friends. A water wagtail came and perched on the sundial outside, and a bolder robin strutted on the window sill and pecked a crumb out of Uncle Will's fingers.

It was little characteristics like that which had seemed so delightful to John Longhurst when his wife's brother had first come to live with them. Even now, when he went out of the room with the reproachful smile of a man who has been much maligned but doesn't harbour malice, John was struck with compunction. Perhaps he had been rather too abrupt and brutal in issuing his ultimatum. But the situation could not go on like this. Merely from a financial point of view it could not go on. The burden of this old house and its upkeep was becoming too great. Many of the weekly bills were unpaid. The tradesmen were getting fractious.

Cyril and Edward Jermyn arrived down to breakfast almost together, followed by Cyril's wife, Barbara.

John's watchful eyes noticed that Cyril had not shaved yet—a new sign of demoralisation—and that Edward Jermyn had a new pair of flannel trousers, spotlessly white, faultlessly creased, beneath his old Magdalen blazer. For a man of forty-five, who had been through the war, he was still astonishingly young. There was not a crow's-foot about his bright, humorous eyes, nor more than a few grey hairs each side of his high forehead. Unlike Cyril, he was carefully shaved, and his bronzed, rather hatchet-featured face—more like that of a naval officer than of a painter, poet and ex-soldier—was a handsome picture of good health and philosophical content.

Barbara wore a low-necked blouse—daringly low-necked, thought her father-in-law, who was a Puritan at heart, though he prided himself on being Bohemian in his instincts—and a little white linen frock.

She greeted John with a "Hello, daddy—still feeding?" and served a plate of porridge to Ned Jermyn with the satirical remark of "This for the bird-like appetite of a minor poet!"

"Not so much of that 'minor,' ma'am," said Jermyn play-

fully. "I and Will Shakespeare are among the few who have written a really perfect sonnet."

"But Shakespeare used to get paid for them," said Barbara, "and you don't."

"The difference between the Golden Age and the squalor of these deplorable times," answered Jermyn. "The profiteer is not a patron of the arts. He buys showy motors and all vulgarities instead of seeking out beauty and good craftsmanship."

"I agree with him," said Barbara. "I would prefer a good car to the most exquisite sentiment in rhymed verse or blank."

"Philistine!"

In passing Barbara to get the sugar from the sideboard, Edward Jermyn pinched the lobe of her ear. She did not resent the familiarity, but only slapped his hand. But John, with a quick glance at Cyril, noticed a kind of gloom settle on the boy's face.

"What's doing to-day?" Cyril asked in a sullen voice, as though fed up with the prospect of the hours ahead, though it was breakfast time and a summer day with sunshine in the gardens.

"A full programme, as far as I'm concerned," said Jermyn cheerfully. "At least an hour's work on my portrait of Barbara—it's going to establish my reputation—then a slashing single with you on the court—I beat you yesterday, young fellow!—then half an hour's quiet meditation in the rose garden, to get inspiration for my sonnet cycle. After lunch, literary work as the Muse may dictate. After tea, a foursome at croquet with Barbara as my partner against Mrs. Longhurst and you. We'll give 'em another whopping, Barbara! And after dinner, music. In what better way could we serve God and fulfil the works of peace?"

He gave a smiling glance at John Longhurst, as though the question were unanswerable. But when an answer came he was surprised and shocked.

John had risen from the table and stood with his back to the great fireplace, above which was the portrait of an old Longhurst dame in a Queen Anne dress.

"I think you could all serve God a great deal better," he said, "if, instead of sponging on a hard-pressed man, you were to get out of this house and earn an honest living for yourselves. I hate to speak like that, but my patience is at an end. Haven't you any spirit, Jermyn, or any pride, Cyril? Month after month passes and you spend it in idleness and pleasure—tennis, croquet, music, garden parties, late nights, tomfoolery, while I go up to town each day to a laborious task in a government office, and wonder how my slender salary is going to pay for all this entertainment. You talk about work, Jermyn. It's merely another form of play! When you do get a few guineas out of a bit of painting you spend it on—a new pair of flannel trousers! As for you, Cyril, I am aghast at the future. What are you going to do for yourself and your wife when I can keep you no longer? When I drop dead in harness? The money I shall leave will be hardly enough to keep your poor mother in decent comfort. Are you going to sponge on her?"

This speech—the longest John Longhurst had ever made in his life—was received in amazed silence by his family and friend, who gazed at one another in incredulity, as though they could not believe their ears.

It was hard for them to believe, not knowing the secret thoughts in sleepless nights, the increasing irritation, the nerve storms and brain fag that had led up to this outburst. Daddy and dear old John, as he was called by his family and Ned Jermyn, had not altered in their eyes from the easy-going, good-natured, shy, unselfish man who wanted everybody to be happy, and had obviously survived the war for the divinely appointed purpose of providing a house and home for those who had been handicapped by war's annoying results in the economic sphere. He had even gone too far, they thought, in his mission. The two gardeners, who killed more plants than they reared, were Cockney fellows whom he had taken from a street organ because he could not bear to see men of his old battalion reduced to such a means of livelihood. His family had laughed at him for that. The very cook was the widow of one of his old sergeants, and hopelessly incompetent, with a perfect genius for burn-

ing a joint and wrecking a dinner. Jermyn had protested against such altruism.

"I admire your sentiment, dear old John," he said once, "but a woman shouldn't be encouraged to spoil good food, even if she is the widow of an Old Contemptible."

Many times John had expressed his pleasure that the little old mansion should be a house of refuge, and had delighted in the intellectual activity of Edward Jermyn—his painting, his poetry, his music—which, he said, was a liberal education to anybody who had the privilege of his company. For Uncle Will's knowledge of birds and beasts, his handy ways about the house and grounds, his prowess at all outdoor games, daddy—or dear old John—had shown the envious admiration of a town-bred man who doesn't know the difference between a sparrow and a bullfinch, and is a hopeless duffer at any sport.

Hard to believe, though, that it was this same John who stood with his back to the fireplace and denounced those he loved best in the world as though they were guilty of atrocious crimes.

It was Barbara who broke the painful silence following his passionate indictment by a ripple of laughter, at the same time springing from the table and putting her hands on his shoulders.

"My dear benevolent daddy-in-law! You must have got out of bed the wrong way this morning! Run out into the sunshine and laugh at the butterflies. 'God's in his heaven: All's right with the world!'"

"All is not right!" said John, with determined gloom. "Everything is wrong in this particular household."

"My dear old governor," said Cyril, "you're losing your sense of humour. That's fatal. Have a game of tennis."

"I'm sick at the sight of tennis balls," said the boy's father. "Life isn't a game. When are you going to find a career for yourself?"

"Don't I search the 'Situations Vacant' in the *Daily Telegraph* every blessed day?" asked Cyril impatiently. "Is it my fault that there are a million and a half unemployed in England, and that I'm one of 'em? I didn't make the old

war and rot up the chances of youth. Show me a decent job, and I'll jump at it."

"There was that offer of a clerkship in Smallwood's office," said his father. "You turned it down contemptuously."

"Lord, yes! You can't expect a fellow who went to a public school and wore wings in the war to sit on a high stool as a giddy clerk! One must draw the line somewhere."

"You draw it too high," said John. "As high as impossible illusions, like Uncle Will and Ned Jermyn here. You're all living in expectation of the unlikely and fantastic. You must get down to drudgery, as I do."

"That's what's the matter with you, dear old John," said Edward Jermyn, with his handsome, whimsical, courteous smile. "Too much drudgery in that government office! It sours your taste of life, and I'm not surprised."

"Hear! Hear!" said Barbara. "I thoroughly agree."

"What you want, old fellow," continued Jermyn, "is to get back to the *joie de vivre*, the spirit of adventure, the carelessness of soul. How about a little holiday in Normandy?"

"Ripping idea!" said Cyril. "I'm fed up with this house and garden."

"The open road," said Jermyn, warming to his subject. "Old inns—the surf breaking on silver sands—wayside conversations with peasants, wandering folk, open-air philosophers. You're hipped. You want a change."

The word "hipped" spoiled the rest of the speech. It seemed to sting John Longhurst like a wasp.

"I dislike that word 'hipped,'" he protested fretfully. "Uncle Will says I'm hipped. I'm not hipped! I'm only dismayed by the indolence of this household. Playing at life!"

"A good game, John," said Jermyn lightly.

But John ignored him, and his voice hardened when he went on speaking.

"This house can't be maintained on a policy of drift, tennis, and amateur art."

"The old house is all right, dull as it is," said Cyril. "It's

not going to fall down, governor! It's stood for three centuries, and will last a bit longer."

"I wish I'd never inherited the place," said John with immense gloom. "Your mother and I were happy in the little house in the Earl's Court Road. There were no spare bedrooms there."

The last sentence annoyed Edward Jermyn. He spoke as though it had touched his tenderest sensibilities.

"I'm sorry you begrudge me an attic in this old rabbit hutch. Of course if that's an ultimatum, I'll pack my bags to-night. But I never expected to be turned out, neck and crop, by a man whose life I once saved—well—at some little risk. Forgive me for that reminder!"

"I wish to heaven you hadn't saved my rotten life!" said John, violently; and at that remark, which was tragic enough, there was an outburst of laughter from Cyril and Barbara, in which Edward Jermyn joined.

"My dear old daddy-in-law!" cried Barbara. "It's no good saying you're not hipped. You are! You are! You are!"

"It's liver," said Cyril. "For goodness sake take some strenuous exercise, governor!"

Edward Jermyn's musical laugh joined the hilarity of the two others.

"If I hadn't saved your life, John, I should have lost my D.S.O.!"

"Oh, well, of course, if you think I am being funny!" said John.

He felt for his pipe in the side pocket of his jacket, and went abruptly from the morning room to the room that he called his study.

Lately he had been studying such unpleasant forms of research as income-tax returns, land tax, local rates, poor rate, and a bulky sheaf of papers marked legibly in his own hand, "Unpaid bills."

And they thought he was being funny!

They also thought he was hipped! This house of inheritance had been a curse instead of a blessing. If only he had stayed on in the little stucco villa in the Earl's Court Road he would not have been overweighted with debt and depres-

sion. By this time Cyril would have found a job in life. Edward Jermyn would be living on his own means—or at somebody else's expense. Uncle Will would have gone back to Canada.

He was most anxious about Cyril and Barbara, his wife. In spite of hilarious evenings with Uncle Will, the boy was miserable and demoralised. And all was not well between him and Barbara. They were seldom alone together now. Barbara was too often alone with Edward Jermyn. That portrait was taking an unconscionable time!

John raised his eyes from the bundle of income-tax returns, and gazed absent-mindedly through the casement window of his study. It looked on to a little Italian garden, paved with tiles through which grass grew, and closed in by clipped hedges. A figure of Mercury with his winged feet hovered above a leaden basin to which the garden birds came for refreshment.

As John raised his head Barbara and Ned Jermyn passed the window on their way to the outhouse which Jermyn used as his studio. For a moment they stood, hand in hand, by the leaden bird bath. John heard Jermyn's musical voice and the words he spoke.

"Your portrait will be finished to-day, my dear. I can't add another stroke to it! What shall we do without our precious hour together?"

"Paint me again!" said Barbara. "We mustn't give up the only time we have to ourselves without interruption."

"What would Cyril say, and your worthy daddy-in-law?"

"Why should they say anything?"

Jermyn laughed his ripe, deep, mellow laugh.

"Cyril is a wee bit jealous of our friendship, little girl!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

John saw the impatient shrug of her pretty shoulders as she passed behind one of the yew hedges with Jermyn.

He stared again at the income-tax returns, but they meant nothing to him at that moment. This was a new danger, which as yet he had only vaguely guessed, though an uneasiness had been working in his mind, subconsciously, about this intimacy between his son's wife and Jermyn—the man who

had saved his life. They were too much together. They had little secret jokes that they did not share with the rest of the family. Their glances lately had been lingering and sentimental. And Cyril had noticed. That shadow on his face was a proof of some darkness in the boy's spirit.

Jermyn must go. Uncle Will must go. The boy must go. Cyril must get away from this lazy, do-nothing, sheltered life, and face the responsibilities of the open world, as a married man, away from the enervating influence of this old secluded house. It was all the fault of this house, with its spare bedrooms and its gardens of delight. His inheritance had not been a blessing, but a curse. If all else failed, the house must go. If only he could sell the place—at a time when hundreds of old houses were up for sale—and unsaleable!

That thought came to John as a kind of desperate hope. He left his chair and paced up and down the room with a strange look of excitement. If he got rid of the house he would get rid of his debts, his guests, this new danger between Jermyn and Barbara, this dreadful anxiety about Cyril. Take away the house from them and they would be forced to fend for themselves, like birds thrust from the parent nest for their own good.

"It's the only way," said John Longhurst aloud; and his wife, who came into the room at that moment, smiled at him and looked surprised.

"What's the only way, my dear?"

He hesitated to answer her.

Standing there in the doorway, in a white dress and a gardening hat, with a rosebud fastened to her breast by the little brooch he had given her when they were married, she looked so placid and contented with life that he shirked telling her his decision that by any means they must get rid of the old house.

It was useless, anyhow. She failed to understand his anxieties. When he had told her of the financial strain involved in the upkeep of the house she had answered plaintively, "I'm sure I'm most economical, my dear," as though he were accusing her of personal and wanton extravagance.

When he had complained bitterly of Cyril's laziness she had pleaded for greater patience with a boy whose nerves had been upset by the war. When he had threatened to expel Edward Jermyrn she was shocked at this ingratitude to the man who had saved his life. When he had fretted against Uncle Will's unending visit she had trotted out the old sentimental platitude that blood is thicker than water, and excused her brother for his drunken ribaldry on the score that he was the best-hearted fellow in the world and that one must make allowances for men who have been through the horrors of war.

She had even turned the tables by telling her husband that he was getting morose in advancing years, and that he no longer seemed to enjoy making other people happy.

"I'm afraid the war has spoiled your old idealism, my dear," she had said. "It has made you hard and materialistic."

So now, when she stood there in the doorway of his study, he did not answer her question about the remark he had made aloud.

"Nothing of importance," he said. "What are you all doing to-day?"

Mrs. Longhurst laughed in a vexed way.

"It seems strange that all of you have forgotten the vicar's garden party. He particularly wants us all to go, including Uncle Will and Mr. Jermyrn. There will be dancing on the lawn. I rely on you to join us, my dear."

"No," he answered gruffly. "Nothing will induce me to go to such time-wasting nonsense. Besides, I'm going to be very busy this afternoon."

"Oh, those wretched old figures!" cried Mrs. Longhurst, glancing at the papers on his desk. "How you worry about them!"

"It won't be figures this afternoon," said her husband. "It's something more important even than those."

"The vicar will be extremely hurt if you don't come with us!"

"Hang the vicar!" said John sharply.

He didn't answer when his wife protested that his nerves

had gone to pieces for some reason or other. He knew that his nerves had gone to pieces and that he was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He was relieved that she did not use the word "hipped." He was waiting for it. If she had spoken it he would have shouted with rage.

She gave him a reproachful glance and then left the room without another word, while he sat down at his desk again and stifled a groan.

That afternoon he was left alone in the house. Even the dinner-spoiling cook and the two destructive gardeners and the impudent parlour maid had gone round to the vicar's garden to serve in the refreshment tent. Ned Jermyn, under protest, sincere or otherwise, abandoned the programme he had mapped out for himself and accompanied Mrs. Longhurst and Barbara, in a beautiful new suit of fawn brown and a panama hat, looking more elegant even than usual.

"One must do one's duty to society," he said. "Otherwise civilisation will disintegrate."

Uncle Will, looking forward to the vicar's claret cup, and a possible whisky, sloped off with Cyril, who protested that he loathed garden parties and detested both the vicar and his wife.

They did not return to Longhurst Hall until eight o'clock, and, apart from Cyril, were in high spirits.

The garden party, according to Mrs. Longhurst, had been most delightful. There had been games and sports, and Uncle Will had won the egg-and-spoon race, the badminton singles, and the cock-fighting match against the vicar, which had provoked roars of laughter.

Edward Jermyn had also been the life and soul of the gathering, and had taught the village girls the one-step and the fox trot, to their intense delight, though Mrs. Arkwright, the vicar's wife, had been rather shocked. He and Barbara had given some demonstration dancing, to the great admiration of all assembled.

"They are so perfectly matched!" was the verdict of Lady Ashstead, as Mrs. Longhurst reported. "They look as though they were one mind in two bodies—such unison and such harmony!"

Cyril showed his ill-humour at this account by the words "Silly old fathead!" with reference to Lady Ashstead, and he only gave a sulky frown when Barbara and Ned Jermyn laughed at this description of the leading lady in the county.

"It was such a pity you didn't come with us!" said Mrs. Longhurst to her husband. "I can't think what you have been doing all this time alone. It quite spoiled my enjoyment when I thought of you moping here."

"I didn't mope," answered her husband. "I was busy."

He seemed to be busy still, for after dinner he retired again to his study and shut the door. But several times in the course of an hour he opened it again and stood in the passage outside, listening intently. He could hear the noise of laughter and music in the billiard room. Cyril thumped out some ragtime tunes, and later Uncle Will's voice roared out the song of the "Long, Long Trail."

Mrs. Longhurst was sitting with them, and stayed up later than usual. John could hear his wife's placid laugh when the billiard room door was opened now and then.

He shut his own door cautiously and quietly whenever that happened, until, presently, he turned his light out and then stood in the darkness of the passage, listening again and looking towards the light in the hall beyond.

He did not stir when Barbara came out of the billiard room—at a quarter to ten, as he could tell by the luminous hands of his wrist watch—followed a minute later by Jermyn. They stood a little while below the great stairway, whispering, and John was almost certain, but not quite, that Jermyn bent down and kissed the girl's hands. She gave a little laugh, and slapped him, and then both of them went back to the billiard room, where Cyril was playing a sentimental ballad.

Uncle Will, excited, doubtless, by his success at the vicar's garden party, and stimulated, as usual, by his after-dinner drinks, was in boisterous spirits, and his voice was loudest and his laughter most frequent in that room on the other side of the hall in which John was standing motionless. Presently it was Uncle Will's turn to come out. He stumbled up the oak stairway and seemed to be busy with some metal

work on the landing above. John heard him give a loud chuckle, now and then, as though vastly amused. Once he cursed, when something fell with a metallic ring on to the polished boards.

A few minutes later he appeared again, but not in his usual form, shining in the light that came from the electric bulb in the old ironwork lantern at the foot of the stairway. He was clad cap-à-pie in the suit of knight's armour to which it was his habit to address ridiculous remarks when he went to bed in a state of fuddled humour.

He clanked across the hall like Richard Cœur de Lion, flung open the billiard room door, and gave a great shout of "What ho, varlets! By my halidom, I would fain quaff a goblet of good wine with ye!"

A burst of laughter applauded his appearance. Mrs. Longhurst's laugh rang out shrilly. Barbara gave a loud, comical squeal. Edward Jermyn's musical voice was moved to mirth.

It was at that moment that John stepped out of the shadowed doorway of his study, and stood looking anxiously up the oak stairway.

From the left-hand room on the landing, his own bedroom, a thin cloud of brownish smoke crept under the door, and a moment later a little red flame shot out, like a tongue, through one of the panels. It grew longer and licked a piece of tapestry on the landing outside. For a moment it did not seem to like the taste of that tapestry, for it drew back, but then, a second later, darted out again and set light to the ancient and moth-eaten hanging, so that it was suddenly ablaze.

John seemed spellbound by the sight. His face, lit by the electric bulb in the ironwork lantern, was intensely white, except for dark shadows about his eyes. For at least a minute he stood as motionless as when he had been listening in his doorway. Then, drawing a quick, noisy breath, he turned and ran down the passage to the billiard room.

Uncle Will, in his knight's armour, was brandishing a whisky bottle as though it were a club. He had his visor up, and was making heroic postures. Mrs. Longhurst was

laughing weakly, and Barbara, Ned Jermyn and Cyril were flinging cushions at the iron-plated figure of Uncle Will.

This scene was a momentary vision when John burst open the door and stood before his family and friend with an ashen face.

"The house is on fire!" he said in a loud, terrible voice.

It was very much on fire by the time they had all made a rush for the hall. The old tapestry on the landing was a spreading flame, and the panelling was disastrously alight. John's bedroom was a furnace from which a fire roared out noisily.

The servants had just become aware of the smell of smoke and the crackle of old wood. The cook came up from the kitchen below stairs screaming the word "Fire!" The parlour maid was shrieking in hysteria; the two gardeners, whom John had rescued from a piano organ, obeyed Jermyn's order to run quickly to the stable yard for buckets of water.

It was useless to pour buckets of water on a fire that was devouring the heart of an old manor house. In less than twenty minutes there was no question but that of escape.

John led out his wife, trying to comfort her. She was greatly distressed, and wept in a tragic way at the sight of the flames devouring the house she had loved so much. Cyril caught hold of Barbara when she tried to make her way into the morning room to carry off some trinkets, and it almost required force as well as persuasion to rescue her from the heat and fumes.

Both Uncle Will and Ned Jermyn were certainly gallant in their efforts to subdue the flames by organising a service of water with hand buckets. They were persuaded of its futility by John.

"It's useless! It's useless!" he repeated sharply. "Nothing will save the old place now!"

He was strangely and heroically calm in the face of this great misfortune.

The villagers came crowding up, with willing hearts and hands for rescue work, but in the end the roof fell in, and when the fire was spent the ramshackle old manor house was

a gutted wreck. Only the ground floor was saved. The top part of the house, including all the spare bedrooms, was utterly destroyed.

John Longhurst and his wife are now living in a semi-detached house in West Kensington. Uncle Will has gone back to Canada. Edward Jermyn has departed to paint society beauties in New York, where he is doing very well. Cyril has a job in the Ministry of Pensions, and has taken a house for Barbara, and the baby, in a suburb of London.

Poor Mrs. Longhurst never ceases to mourn for the beauty of the old house which was hers, but her husband, who looks less worried than before, and is much admired in Whitehall for the philosophical way in which he accepted a heavy blow from Fate, tries to console her with the thought "there are worse misfortunes at sea."

The two gardeners are trying their luck with a piano organ again, and John gives them a generous tip when they come to play beneath his windows.

VIII: THE WELLS OF TRUTH

“**L**OOK here, father, I can’t stand this poisonous place any more. I’m off!” These words, spoken fretfully, almost passionately, by a young man with a fair, freckled face, and flame-red hair, rang out in the editor’s room of *The Daily Record*.

It was a room in which no one had the right, nor, as a rule, the inclination, to speak passionately, except the editor himself, who now sat back in his carved-oak chair before a Jacobean table—sham antique, but rather handsome—with raised eyebrows and a queer, ironical smile on his melancholy, haggard-looking face.

Edward Dalton, managing editor of *The Daily Record*, did not often allow himself to get angry. His sarcasm was sufficiently terrifying to his staff without the need of loud speech or table thumping. Now, when his own son, nominally a sub-editor, but always a rebel, announced his decision to throw up his job, Dalton merely showed by a little tinge of colour creeping up his neck to the tips of his ears that he was deeply annoyed.

He answered quietly, with a kind of sharp edge to his voice: “Better shut the door, hadn’t you, if you propose to make a scene?”

It was not the first scene that had happened between them, in this very room, since his son had come back after the war, grown from a boy to a man, almost a stranger to him, rather nervy, bitter in his way of speech, hating an indoor life, inefficient and insubordinate as a sub-editor, and full of whims and crankiness. Before he had earned his first month’s salary he had announced his marriage to an artist girl—he had picked her up in a rowdy set at Chelsea—and they had just had their first baby in the cottage at Leatherhead, which he pretended to prefer to his father’s house in Lowndes Square.

The boy shut the door with an angry shove and stood there in a sulky way, smoking an old pipe and reminding his father of the days when he used to be a shock-headed Peter, protesting that his nurse was a nasty cat because she insisted on poking out his ears with a hard towel.

"My last night!" he said. "I can't stand that ass Pinney any more. I'll forfeit a month's screw."

"That's all right," said Dalton coldly. "But what am I going to tell your mother? She's worried to death about you already."

Young Frank shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

"No need to worry, father. Meg and I are perfectly happy. I can always earn a bit as a free lance. I'm learning the trick of short stories."

"A poor game," said Edward Dalton. "I know what free-lance work means—constant disappointment, endless worry. Better stick it out here, Frank."

The boy shook his head and said, "Me for liberty and a clean life!"

"It puts me into a difficult position with Brockham," said Dalton. "What the dickens am I to tell him?"

The name of the proprietor of *The Daily Record* seemed to enrage the red-headed boy.

"I'd like to tell him a few things myself. By Jove, I would!"

"What things?" asked his father. "What's your trouble, barring laziness?"

The boy took a short, sharp breath, as though about to get something rather oppressive off his chest.

"I'd like to tell him what I think of this house of lies, this cesspool of sex stuff, this manufactory of faked news, this stirring pot of world strife, this pander shop of mob passion, this brewer's vat of poison gas, this propaganda agency of the next war!"

Edward Dalton laughed grimly at his son's outburst.

"I didn't know you had such a genius for head-lines. I've never observed them in your copy. Well, if you've made up your mind——"

He bent over his desk and smoothed out the proof of a

leading article. Young Frank Dalton was not near enough to the desk to see that his father's hand trembled a little.

The boy stared gloomily at the Turkey carpet, and then looked up with a whimsical smile as though all his anger had gone.

"Sorry for a somewhat explosive speech," he said. "All the same, it's best for me to clear out. The spirit of this place and that swine Pinney get on my nerves beyond all words. See you down at the cottage one day?"

His father did not answer and pretended to be absorbed in his work, though the hard line of his lips softened a little. Young Frank, without further words, lounged out of the room and shut the door behind him more quietly than usual.

For a few moments after his son's exit, Edward Dalton sat motionless at his desk, staring at his brass inkpot. He looked tired and worried, perhaps a little ill. The hard mask that he had worn in the presence of his son, as he wore it habitually before his staff, seemed to fall from him when he was alone. His face revealed some of that sensibility which had been the outstanding quality of his character as a young man, when he had aspired to literature and cherished ideals in the way of art and life, before he had been hardened by the rough game of journalism as he had played it for the prize of editorial success. He had fought the strain of weakness in his character. At first he had hated to sack men at the bidding of his proprietor, or when he had squeezed them dry of vitality. He had steeled himself all right; broken scores of men who had been incompetent or worn out or too independent in their views. That had given him a bad reputation in Fleet Street, as he knew. They called him a ruthless swine—so Frank informed him. Well, never, except in the case of his own son, had he allowed friendship or personal relations to interfere with his judgment. That was the only way to hold the editorial job that had come to him first as news editor, then as foreign editor, now as managing editor. The paper, first and last; and absolute allegiance to the man who paid. That was the only way of safety in these days when the newspaper business was a cut-throat game, with precious few prizes as big as this.

Precious few! If he lost *The Record* he would never get another job as managing editor. He was too much tarred with the Brockham touch. He knew that. He had seen it clearly from the moment he accepted Brockham's terms.

"I'll pay you to carry out my policy, follow my lead, fulfil my ideas of what a newspaper ought to be—and it's going to be worth your while."

He had accepted these conditions at the price named, and subordinated every conviction of his own, all his youthful, finicky ideas of truth and honour and moral uplift—as the Americans call it—for the fulfilment of his bargain. It had been worth while. He was the most powerful editor in Fleet Street, the most successful journalist outside the big five of newspaper proprietors. He enjoyed social and political power. Anyhow, his wife could crowd his house in Lowndes Square with celebrities and great folk whenever she cared to give a reception. He drew the biggest salary of any editor in London.

Dalton let his eyes wander from his brass inkstand to the photograph of his daughter that stood beside it. Her face smiled up at him with its alluring, mischievous look. Sometimes when he glanced at it in office hours his eyes lighted up, but to-night he sighed heavily. There was another photograph in the same frame with that girl's face. It was a portrait of his son in the uniform of an officer in the tank corps; smart, cheeky-looking, full of pluck. It was the remembrance of Frank's sarcastic contempt of *The Record*, his utter scorn for his father's work, his loathing of the job he had now chucked, as he would say, that caused Dalton to give a heavy sigh which was half a groan. He touched the bell on his desk and told the boy who answered it to send in the night editor.

It was Herbert Pinney, who had been in lodgings with him in Brixton, twenty-five years ago, when they were reporters on rival papers, with ambitions of novel writing, play writing, and even—good Lord!—mystical verse in the style of Rossetti. Well, Pinney no longer wrote mystical verse, and had moved years ago from Brixton to Kensington, and was

cynical to the uttermost recess of his soul, and as hard as steel under his mask of geniality and good nature.

"How are things going?" asked Dalton.

Pinney threw the stump of his cigar into the fire grate and felt for another in his breast pocket. He was a stout, florid man, with heavily puffed eyes and a waistline too big for his height.

"Up to time, if you'll let go of the leader, old man. Can't think why you hang to it so long."

"Rendall doesn't keep in line with our policy," answered Dalton. "Brockham went off the deep end because of that reference the other night to oil in Mesopotamia."

Pinney grimaced and bit off the end of his cigar.

"Rendall has oil on the brain. Better sack him before he makes a stink about it."

"Yes," said Dalton grimly; "he's always dragging out the ugly truth. That's why I have to hack his stuff about."

Pinney puffed out a lovely ring of smoke as he lay back in one of the leather chairs and smiled at the ceiling.

"We can't allow him to make a hobby of it—at our expense. We're here to keep out the ugly facts if they're hostile to the interests of our worthy proprietor and those of his friends, relatives and confederates. Brockham hires us as his faithful truth twisters."

"You're a master of the art, Pinney," said Dalton with a touch of sarcasm.

"Under your leadership, old man."

The two men looked into each other's eyes for just the fraction of a second with a kind of challenge. Then Pinney smiled in his fat, amiable way, and changed the topic of conversation.

"Your son tells me he's shaking our unpleasant dust off his mercurial feet—in other words, quitting."

"Yes," answered Dalton. "He's been cursing his fate for some time. The war unfitted him for this kind of life, I suppose. What was his particular trouble to-night?"

Pinney shrugged his broad shoulders and gave a chuckle.

"Same trouble as Rendall's. That boy of yours is a bright young idealist under his red hair. Thinks journalists ought

to save humanity from its sins, and all that. Has the innocent idea that a newspaper ought to lead the nation unto righteousness. I wonder you haven't put him wise, old man."

Dalton glanced over at Pinney with a look of irritation.

"D'you think I haven't argued with him? And d'you think it's any good, from modern fathers to modern sons? There's a gulf between us, unbridgeable! I suppose the war made it. Did he have a row with you?"

"Not the first! I get on his sensitive nerves. He thinks I'm a gross, brutal, unkind man. When I told him to cut out that speech by General Smuts—dead against our line—he went up in the air like a flame-tipped rocket."

"Smuts' speech?"

"Yes," said Pinney. "Says Europe is like a sleep-walker on the edge of a precipice, and all its leaders are raving mad. That's indirect criticism of Brockham's crowd, to say nothing of France."

"Frank was hipped because you suppressed it?" asked Dalton.

Pinney laughed with a good-natured sound, but his eyes had an ugly look in them.

"Played the rebel against my authority with the sub-editors. If it had been anybody but your son, old man——'What Smuts says is God's truth!' he shouted, so that all the fellows stopped writing. 'If we don't wake up it's the ruin of civilisation!' Then he told me that if we didn't print this speech he would walk out of the office, and be damned to all of us! Flat rebellion, old man!"

Dalton agreed. Of course Frank had behaved foolishly. It was impossible, he admitted, to keep the boy on the staff.

"All the same—theoretically—he's right about that speech of Smuts'."

Pinney raised his eyebrows and let his cigar flop at the corner of his full-blooded lips.

"Right?"

"Yes; it's a damned shame to suppress it. Smuts is one of the few men who give a lead to the world."

Pinney flung half a good cigar into the fire and twisted

round in his chair, to stare at Dalton. Then he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Ted, old boy, you're not slipping into the slough of idealism, are you? Young Frank hasn't been undermining your common sense, I hope; or Rendall, with his world-saving notions."

Dalton made a gesture of impatience with his paper knife.

"There's a limit to the suppression of news," he answered. "We can't keep out every word that happens to conflict with Brockham's point of view. Smuts is a great man . . . I believe that if Jesus Christ came to London and denounced corruption in high places you would suppress the agency report."

"I certainly should."

After a gust of laughter, Pinney rose from his chair and put his plump hand on Dalton's shoulder.

"Ted, old boy, I suspect you of weakening. Honour bright, I do! As an old and trusty friend, I advise you to tonic yourself up a bit. A week at Brighton wouldn't do you any harm. That's what Brockham thinks too."

Dalton raised his head sharply at this mention of the proprietor.

"What's he been saying?"

"Nothing to me. It was something he said to Heneage in the club the other day. At least Heneage says so."

"Says what?"

Dalton's nerves seemed to be rattled. He spoke heatedly. Pinney smiled at him, but with watchful eyes.

"Perhaps I oughtn't to repeat. He told Heneage that he thought you were losing grip. He seemed to be devilishly wrathful about that paragraph you passed on starvation in Germany. Thought it oughtn't to have been published because it aroused false sentiment. 'Dalton is losing grip,' he said to Heneage. I thought you ought to know."

"Much obliged," said Dalton with icy sarcasm. "And next time you see Heneage tell him from me that he's a loose-mouthed liar!"

Pinney was vastly amused. He chuckled and laughed over this description of Heneage, one of the big five.

"I don't think he was lying. Still, you never know. But what about that leader? It's holding up page four."

Dalton handed him the proof and Pinney waved it in a friendly way as he left the room. At the door he turned round, still chuckling.

"I'm not likely to give Heneage that message. I may want him to give me a job one of these days. Oh, it's a great game, this life, if one keeps one's sense of humour!"

Dalton spoke aloud after the door had closed:

"I'm losing my sense of humour, and that's the curse of it!"

The telephone bell summoned him, but he ignored the sound, staring savagely at the little instrument. It was Brockham, of course. He generally rang up at this time. He couldn't leave the paper alone. The bell rang again, insistently, and Dalton picked up the receiver.

"Oh, good evening. Yes, the paper is well under way. Smuts' speech? No, we're keeping that out. The riots in Germany? Well, we're printing a bit, but dampening it all down, of course. Rather a pity, in a way . . . I say it's rather a pity from a news point of view. Vernon's message from Essen is marvellous stuff—full of drama. Pro-German? Not a bit of it! Sack him? No, I won't hear of it. He's one of our best men. No, I'm damned if I will, Brockham! Well, let's talk it over at lunch to-morrow. Good-night."

Dalton smashed down the receiver and uttered an oath. He stood for a moment gazing round the room, at the oak-panelled walls, the Medici colour prints, the grandfather's clock, the Jacobean chairs. Very handsome; suitable to the dignity of a managing editor. When he had first stood with his back to this fireplace, surveying this room, he had been uplifted by a sense of success. He had struggled up all the rungs of journalism to the top of the ladder. After a hard fight, through the squalors and humiliations and insecurities of Fleet Street, he had arrived in this room of power. Managing editor of *The Daily Record*, at forty-one years of age! Not a bad reward for great endeavour. His wife was pleased, almost satisfied. Well, she would be able to spread

herself a little now. So he had thought when he first took possession of this room, where for ten years he had spent fourteen out of the twenty-four of most working days.

To-night he hated the very sight of the room. It had become his prison house, and lately the torture chamber of his soul. Queer, that! As managing editor of *The Daily Record* he ought not to have a soul. It was not in the contract. It didn't belong to the machinery that he controlled for the production of a two-million circulation. He wasn't paid to have a soul, or a conscience, or whatever the thing was that lately had begun to nag at him and give him strange visions of forces—bigger than a two-million circulation—bearing down upon him in this room, and upon every individual in England and in Europe. Forces of revolt and anarchy were stirring hunger-stricken people; forces of hate and fear were preventing any recovery from the ruin and wretchedness of a war that had destroyed the wealth of the world; forces of passionate stupidity and entrenched ignorance were leading the people of Europe, as sure as fate, to a tragic doom.

Sitting here in this room he was a receiving instrument connected by live wires to all the nerve centres of the world. All day long there came to his desk flimsies holding the latest bulletins of the world's disease, from news agencies, from special correspondents, from a thousand sources of information. His expert brain could put them together like a jigsaw puzzle. They produced a picture blackly etched on his mind. Each little item of fact fitted exactly into a moving picture of endless reels. Day by day he saw the unwinding of a coil of fate that was leading to a financial crash in Europe, the heaping of ruin on ruin, new wars, more frightful than the last. And it was his job, by selection of news, by suppression of facts, by false emphasis, distortion and evasion, the trick of the snappy headline and the audacious lie in big-faced type, to hide the vision of that reality from the British people. All the power of this engine that he controlled was used to stir up their passion, pander to their vanity, prejudice and ignorance, and to lead them deliberately into the abyss that yawned ahead.

He was in this handsomely furnished room, and in this seat of power, a traitor to truth, and the bought man of those evil forces that were closing in upon the human family. Not a pleasant thought! Lately it had nagged at him, kept him awake at night, destroyed that sense of humour which had been his shield against the vulgarities and dishonesties of the journalistic game.

His private secretary, an obsequious, smiling fellow—Dalton wished he would leave off smiling sometimes in such a damned servile way—came in with a bunch of letters and asked for instructions about certain points. The Berlin correspondent was huffed because his messages had been massacred by sub-editors. The Prime Minister's private secretary would be glad to see the editor any day next week. He wanted to indicate the Government's policy about French action in Germany. The gravity of it must be minimised at all costs. He also wanted to sound the editor as to the state of public opinion on the Near East. Would they stand for the mobilisation of the army reserves in the event of a Turkish advance? Events were most threatening.

The editor's secretary smiled as though the threat amused him.

"That'll do," said Dalton. "They'll keep till to-morrow. Give me a hand with my coat, will you?"

The secretary helped him into his coat, smoothing the astrakhan collar as though he loved it, and he caressed the editor's silk hat before handing it to him.

"Good night," said Dalton.

As he left the office he listened for a moment to the throb of the great machines. They were printing the early edition for the country. Dalton glanced at his wrist watch through force of habit. Yes, up to time all right. The two-million circulation was under way. In another hour part of it would be on the night trains, carrying the day's *Record* as it had been arranged, selected and edited by Dalton and his sub-editors—to every part of the country.

A printer's boy came up with the contents bill, to be passed by Pinney upstairs. Dalton stopped him and said, "Let's

see." It was one of Pinney's tonic slogans, as he called them:

BRITISH TRADE LEADS THE WORLD
BOOM YEAR ASSURED

"That's all right," said Dalton.

He said good night to the commissioner, who saluted him at the swing door. Outside, the managing editor stood for a moment under the revolving light of the greatest sky sign in London:

THE DAILY RECORD
ALL THE TRUTH

The horn on his car gave a gurgle like a frightened peacock as a sign that his chauffeur had seen him. The car drew out of an alley on the opposite side of the way.

Through the swing door came a young man in a hurry. It was young Frank, who collided sharply with his father, and said, "Sorry, dad."

"What train are you getting?" asked Dalton.

"The last. But I've twenty minutes to spare, so I'll do a bit of a stroll down the old Embankment."

"I'll walk with you," said his father, "if you've no objection."

For the life of him he could not keep the sarcastic note out of those last words, through force of habit.

"Not in the least," answered Frank. "It's not my Embankment."

They had been edgy like that, speaking with latent hostility, or at least across a gulf of misunderstanding, ever since the boy had tried his hand at journalism under his father's command. And yet Dalton craved for his son's affection, for a comradeship that he could not get because of his own coldness of manner, some queer shyness.

He told his chauffeur to drive home alone, and walked by his son's side silently down Whitefriars Street to the Embankment. Frank whistled a bit of ragtime and thrust his

felt hat back from his forehead, as though to cool it from the heat of the sub-editors' room that he had left forever.

A soft wet wind was blowing, and the river lights were blurred on the black old waterway because of little ruffling waves. On the Surrey side an advertisement of whisky—a drunken Scot in full colours—appeared and disappeared, and the wharves were black beneath it. There was the swish of taxi traffic down the Embankment, and their lamps made a stream of light along the wet highway.

"I always used to walk this way after the paper had gone to bed, when I was your age," said Dalton. "I used to get the last train home to Brixton."

"Before my time," said Frank, laughing. "Thank goodness!"

All struggling journalists were supposed to live at Brixton. Some actually did. It was incredible that his father should ever have belonged to that squalid suburb. Frank thought so, as he glanced for a second at that tall figure at his side, in a well-cut coat with an astrakhan collar, and a silk hat, as the symbol of power and success.

"Pinney and I used to dig together," said Dalton. "Sometimes we used to walk all the way home—quite a step—to save the train fare."

"Holy poverty!" was Frank's expression of astonishment. He'd had no notion that his father had started so low down the scale as that.

"I remember there used to be a coffee stall at Kennington. Sometimes we used to get baked potatoes there. Jolly good they were—in those days!"

He could smell them now, and the remembrance of youth came back to him with a salt fragrance.

"Pretty good, still," said Frank. "Meg cooks them in a most ambrosial way."

Dalton gave a sideways glance at this boy by his side, who had his hat right off now, so that the wind stirred his carroty hair.

"Life and baked potatoes taste good at twenty-five."

"Why not at fifty?" asked Frank, with the whimsical

intolerance of youth. "The jolly old baked potato hasn't changed its flavour, nor life its good adventure."

How little did youth know or guess! How difficult to get its sympathy and understanding!

They walked on again in silence. Dalton wanted to reveal his soul to his boy, to cry out to him for comradeship, to get even his respect, instead of that boyish contempt, undisguised, for the job he did, and his success, and the power he had for the price paid. But he asked only a hard question.

"That love-in-a-cottage idea—won't it pall on you and that child wife of yours?"

"It hasn't begun to yet," said Frank, laughing good-humouredly. "Meg and I get a lot of fun out of it. Now that I have my liberty again——"

He did not finish his sentence. Perhaps he meant that there would be even greater fun, more time for love.

His father spoke the word "Liberty!" with a gruff laugh, and then stood still for a moment, as though to look at the curve of the river with its gleaming lights reflected in the inky water. A train was crossing the iron bridge from Charing Cross, with a trailing cloud of smoke and fire, and its windows shining like a string of jewels.

"Liberty!" he said again. "My dear chap, there's no such thing in this life. We must all be slaves of some taskmaster. We must all compromise, do work we hate for the wage we get, economise with truth itself in order to keep a home together or pay the butcher's bill. Haven't you found that out?"

It was self-defence, the apology of his life.

"I deny it!" said Frank, cheerfully. "No taskmaster is going to stop me writing short stories as I want to write 'em."

"Yes," said Dalton; "the hardest taskmaster of all—public opinion. The verdict of the mob. If you don't please that you'll starve."

"I'll educate public opinion," said Frank with youthful, imperturbable arrogance. "Meg is the only critic I'll listen

to. So far she's pleased with my stuff. She couldn't bear the idea of my writing much for *The Record*."

"Is that so? She doesn't approve of its moral and literary tone, I understand?"

Dalton spoke ironically, with his usual icy laugh. Frank answered bluntly, not aware of cruelty, not giving his father credit for any sensitive nerves beneath his mask.

"She thinks it a pestilential sheet. Her idealism won't stand for it at any price. Calls it 'The Muckrake'!"

"Very charming and amiable!" said Dalton bitterly. "When you've four babies instead of one, and short stories don't bring in a regular income, she'll be less intolerant of a paper that pays good money."

"Not she! Meg is as obstinate as a mule on a point of principle."

Father and son walked on again, the boy with his springy stride, his ruffled hair, his freckled face held up to the wet wind like a fawn smelling the first odour of spring in the woods; the elderly man, silk-hatted, with a haggard, brooding face and downcast eyes. It was several minutes before Dalton spoke again, and then he asked a question abruptly.

"I suppose you see a lot of young folk—ex-officers, fellows of your own age. What do they think of things?"

"What sort of things?"

"The situation generally, in Europe and here. Have they got any ideas as to the meaning of it all?"

Young Frank laughed into the wet darkness. He thought of all the conversations he heard among Meg's friends, down Chelsea way, and in his club of ex-officers, and in tea shops where he met his pals. They had plenty of ideas, all conflicting and confused; argued hotly, interminably, with terrific cynicism.

"Most of 'em think we're in the deuce of a mess. Pretty obvious, that! Meg's crowd—artists mostly—are out for peace. No patience with the hate stuff and raking up racial passions. Most of my pals—not all, by a long chalk—think Europe's going to the devil. I agree with them, on the whole. France and Germany, the Balkans, Russia—the

whole blooming Mohammedan world—full of explosive stuff. Bound to go off before long, barring miracles. We're asking for it! There may be one alternative, of course."

"What's that?"

Frank stared at a sky sign over Victoria Station, as though reading its message.

"General decadence, nations too low grade even for war on a big scale. Just a slipping down into poverty and a disease of civilisation. . . . Well, I'm satisfied with my little cottage, with Meg and the blue-eyed blinker. I don't care a damn for the world, if it will go on being mad and bad. That's my little philosophy of egotism."

They were now at Victoria, standing on a save-my-life, round which a stream of taxis were swirling—the theatre crowd getting home to the suburbs.

Dalton made a sudden confession to his son.

"Perhaps you're right about that cottage. I envy you, Frank. I'd give every dashed thing in the world to have your youth again, and a free pen, and poverty with the grace of love."

He grasped his son's arm, pressing it tight for a moment, and then walked away towards Ebury Street on the way to Lowndes Square in the heart of Belgravia. Frank looked after him, astonished, touched with a queer sense of pity for the first time in relation to his father.

Dalton walked slowly to his house, and saw by the lighted windows and some waiting motor cars that his wife's guests had not yet gone, though it was getting on to midnight. The door opened, letting out a gush of light in which stood an elderly couple in evening clothes—Lord and Lady Banstead. Dalton's footman called for their car, which slid up silently to the edge of the pavement. Dalton walked on a few paces until they had gone and the door was shut. Then he let himself in with his key.

"How many people still here?" he asked the footman.

"Two couples, sir. Admiral and Mrs. Harper, and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon D'Arcy. Oh, yes, sir, and young Mr. Brockham."

"Again?" said Dalton.

"Yes, sir."

The young footman permitted himself a cautious smile. Young Mr. Brockham had been a frequent visitor of late—almost like one of the family. They had discussed the significance of that below stairs. Mrs. Higgs, the housekeeper, was of opinion that young Brockham was spoony with Miss Beatrice. There would be a red carpet down before long, she thought. The young footman did not communicate these opinions to his master, who went into his study at the end of the hall and stayed there until Admiral and Mrs. Harper and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon D'Arcy had departed from the house.

Young Brockham was still upstairs, as Dalton, sitting deep in an armchair, staring into the red glow of his study fire, heard with ill-concealed annoyance when the footman tapped at his door—it was five minutes past twelve—and delivered a message.

"The mistress would be glad if you would go up, sir."

"Is young Mr. Brockham gone yet?" asked Dalton.

"No, sir. He seemed to be on the point of leaving, but the mistress has asked him to wait until you see him."

The young footman chose his words carefully, and toned down the sense of drama with which he delivered them. They were in a high state of excitement upstairs—the mistress and Miss Beatrice and the young toff—laughing and talking nineteen to the dozen. Something had happened, that was certain. Miss Beatrice had a light in her eyes that was quite painful to a young footman who permitted himself to adore her silently and respectfully, and was jealous of every young gentleman who had the cheek to make eyes at her.

Dalton went upstairs slowly, and stood for a moment at the drawing room door.

"Hullo!" he said, with a forced cheerfulness. "Getting late, isn't it?"

Mrs. Dalton stood by the piano, with her hand on Beatrice's shoulder. She looked excited and happy and more than usually beautiful because of that excitement, per-

haps; though, anyhow, she was elegant and handsome in that gown of purple silk cut low so that her plump shoulders were fully revealed. When he had first married her she had had to go shabby and do her shopping in the cheap shops of Brixton!

Beatrice, in her white silk frock, leaned her dark little head on her mother's shoulder. Young Brockham stood in an awkward way, with a foolish smile, flicking an imaginary smut off his white waistcoat with emerald buttons.

"Edward!" cried Mrs. Dalton, with a little catch in her voice, but a kind of triumph in its note. "We have wonderful news for you!"

"Yes?" asked Dalton. He still smiled in that uneasy way, and his face had gone a shade paler.

"Oh, father!" said Beatrice with a queer, excited laugh.

"What's happened?" asked Dalton.

"The best thing in the world," said Mrs. Dalton. "Harold and Beatrice have discovered they love each other. The dear boy has asked our precious girl to be his wife."

"Frightful cheek and all that," said Harold Brockham, rather fatuously. "But with your permission, sir——"

"Does your father know?" asked Dalton.

He spoke gravely, though his eyes and lips smiled. That he was profoundly moved by the news could be seen by the way his hand trembled as he fumbled to get a cigarette out of his case.

"Oh, the governor's all right," said Harold. "He'll be tremendously bucked. Makes *The Daily Record* more of a family affair."

He laughed in his rather shrill, nervous way. A nice boy with curly hair and a rather girlish face, he had none of his father's strength and brutality, though he had been in the cavalry in the Great War.

"Yes; won't that be splendid!" said Mrs. Dalton. "It will make us all feel so secure!"

Poor lady! The word slipped out of her subconsciousness. In her early days she had lived in fear because of the insecurity of her husband's journalistic life. Out of a job at a moment's notice! Sacked at the whim of editor or

proprietor! Even now, this house in Lowndes Square, her gowns, her sense of social leadership, were dependent on the good will of this boy's father, Victor Brockham.

"Dad," cried Beatrice, laughing but reproachful, "you don't seem very pleased. Where's your paternal blessing?"

She came over and took him by the shoulders and gave him a little shake.

"My dear, my dear," he said, kissing her, "I only want your happiness."

They had been good comrades. She meant more to him than his wife, who had become rather ambitious and worldly of late. He had dreaded the time when some young ass would beguile his daughter away. And now, of all boys, she had chosen young Brockham, the son of his slave driver, the son of the man who had killed his soul, the son of the man who was leading England to ruin!

He turned to the boy and grabbed his arm with a desperate attempt at jocularity.

"So you would steal my little one from me, would you? I'm not giving a word of consent until I hear your father's views on the subject."

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said the boy. "The governor can't object."

"In any case," said Beatrice, audaciously, "parents have no right to interfere nowadays. We're not in the Middle Ages. Now, then, Harold, it's time you left."

She took the boy's hand and ran out of the room with him.

For a moment or two there was silence between husband and wife. They listened to the laughter of the boy and the girl going down the stairs.

"My dear," said Mrs. Dalton, "it's a great thing for all of us. It will consolidate your position. You will become a very great power in the land."

Dalton had been shifting a Dresden-china shepherdess on the mantelpiece. He turned round now sharply, with a look of anguish.

"I would rather Beatrice were dead than marry the son

of that unspeakable blackguard. It shan't happen! I'll resign my position, as Frank has done!"

Mrs. Dalton had risen from her chair. The colour ebbed out of her face.

"Frank! Has he given up *The Record*?"

"Yes; and he's right. He's clean again!"

Mrs. Dalton's hands went to her throat with its necklace of jewels.

"My dear! What on earth do you mean?"

Dalton faced her with a look of sullen determination.

"If you hadn't been so busy as a social climber you'd understand. Haven't you seen what agony I've been enduring for the last ten years, because of that man's insolence, his intolerable brutality? Don't you know what humiliations he has put upon me—indignities, shamefulness? This house of ours, this fine furniture, your gowns and pearls and social show—by heaven, all paid for by my degradation, the filth I have to print at that man's bidding, the lies I have to broadcast to earn his wage, the monstrous dishonesty of my job, which debauches public opinion and poisons the very wells of truth. I'm sick of it! I'll get free of it, and honest again, even if we have to starve. Would to God we were back in Brixton, on three pounds ten a week!"

Mrs. Dalton was white to the lips, and very angry.

"Are you going mad, or something? Brixton! I shudder at the old horror of it!"

She shuddered now, with a real spasm of horror in her white shoulders. Then she stretched out her hands to her husband in a pleading way.

"Edward! You're not going to spoil everything—at our time of life? Bee's happiness—mine!"

Dalton groaned and said, "Haven't I some claim to happiness?"

He repeated the word happiness with a harsh laugh, as though it were damnable irony, and then went out of the drawing-room and up to his bedroom before his daughter came back from a lover's farewell in the hall.

The next day was Saturday—a journalist's holiday. He was in the habit of driving down to Surrey for a game of

golf, and his car came to the door at the usual time. But he told the footman that he did not want his clubs.

Mrs. Dalton came into the hall as he was putting on his coat.

"I hope you'll have a good game, dear," she said rather timidly, giving a sharp glance at his face to see what mood he was in after his strange and terrible speech last night.

"I'm not playing golf this afternoon," he said quietly. "I'm going to see Brockham."

She drew a sharp breath, and her eyes searched his face again. She could not say much before the footman.

"You won't say anything—rash? You'll think of Beatrice and her happiness?"

"Oh, I shan't be rash," he answered with an attempt at light-heartedness.

He raised his eyes and looked at her for the first time since she had spoken to him, and saw that she was deeply anxious, with a very pitiful and pleading look. A remembrance of their early struggle together, the rough time he had given her in those days—poor child—stirred his compassion. He took her hand and kissed it, and was startled at its coldness.

"I shan't be home late," he said.

On the way down to Dorking, where Brockham lived, he opened both the windows of the car and let the breeze blow into his face and ruffle the hair—getting grey and thin—about his forehead. He was tempted to tell Brockham some of the very things that Frank had got off his chest last night.

And yet, had he the right to plunge his wife into poverty again?—for that was what it would mean.

He ran over his chances in Fleet Street. Heneage? No, nothing doing on his papers. Not a ghost of a chance of any big job anywhere. Perhaps news editor somewhere, on half his present salary. That would mean leaving Lowndes Square.

And what about Beatrice? It would wreck her engagement and break the child's heart. Those violent words to his wife could not be put into action without cruelty to

others. Was his honesty, his sense of political truth, to be paid for by the misery of his family? Wasn't all life a compromise, as he had told Frank? Even *The Record* presented only a point of view. Nobody took its word as the infallible truth. It was pleading from a brief, one side of the case; not always the evil side. Anyhow, he was boiling up for a row with Brockham. He would permit himself that luxury without going too far.

Brockham lived in an old English Manor house, a mile or so beyond Dorking. It used to belong to the Hepworths, in whose family it had been for centuries, before they were ruined by the war. They had lived first in a little old castle, of which some walls and heaps of brickwork still remained beyond the avenue of beeches, before building themselves, in Tudor times, the half-timbered house that had been modernised in the eighteenth century, and partly rebuilt twenty years before the European war.

Brockham, who didn't know his own grandfather, and had begun life as a printer's devil somewhere in Peckham, was now the lord of the manor, and concocted his financial stunts under these old roofs that had given shelter to some of the fairest and noblest of English blood. Well, that wouldn't have been against him if he'd had any nobility of his own. But he hadn't—discernible to the human eye.

Dalton walked into the great hall, hung with trophies that had belonged to the Hepworths, and asked one of the men-servants if Mr. Brockham was disengaged.

"There's a gentleman with him in the smoking room, sir."

Long training, no doubt, prevented him from naming the gentleman. But Dalton stared at a hat, stick and gloves laid on the hall table, and knew their owner. Yes, that hat—a hard black bowler with a broad curly brim—and that ebony stick with an ivory handle belonged to Pinney. He saw them every night in *The Record* office. They seemed to express in a subtle way something of Pinney's fat and gross personality. What was he doing here? Dalton had a quick stab of suspicion. What intrigue?

"It's Mr. Pinney," he told the man. "I'll go in. You needn't bother to announce me."

"Very good, sir."

The man had seen Dalton many times before in this house, and knew his place and power on *The Record*.

Dalton went to the smoking room at the end of the hall, and after a tap at the door walked in.

Brockham's bulky body was deep in a big chair, with one leg over its arm. A litter of papers lay on the floor by his side. His bald head caught the light from the window and glistened as though highly greased. His big, flabby face, with heavily puffed eyes behind American glasses, was turned sideways so that he could see Pinney standing by the fireside, suave, deferential, like a lackey getting his orders.

"More ginger, that's what we want! We've been as mushy as oatmeal porridge. That fellow Dalton——"

"Good afternoon," said Dalton. His sudden appearance certainly startled the two men.

Pinney reddened uncomfortably and coughed as though his throat tickled before saying, "Hallo, old man!" with attempted geniality.

Brockham took his leg down from the arm of the chair, sat up, and took off his tortoise shells.

"Didn't expect you, Dalton. Just been talking about you."

He was not betrayed into nervousness, even for the fraction of a second.

"Pleasantly, no doubt," said Dalton.

"That's as may be."

Brockham waved his hand to Pinney with a gesture of dismissal.

"You can go, Pinney. I'll send you the contract."

"I'm extremely obliged," said Pinney. "I can hardly say——"

He glanced at Dalton with watery, uneasy eyes and a guilty look.

"Don't say anything," said Brockham. "It's work that counts."

Pinney bowed, coughed, said "Good afternoon, sir," to Brockham, "Good afternoon, old man," to Dalton, and left the room.

Brockham rose slowly from his chair and faced Dalton.

"What's this about my son and your girl—this silly nonsense?"

"I agree," said Dalton icily. "The silliest nonsense."

"I won't permit it for an instant!" Brockham's puffed eyes had a red stab of fire in their depths. "What the deuce d'you mean by getting my son to your house and throwing him in the way of your girl?"

Dalton had for a moment a murderous desire. This man was a low blackguard, a most insolent hog.

"Your son invited himself to my house. It gave me no pleasure to see him. I should be sorry to have him as my son-in-law."

"You won't!" said Brockham sullenly. "He's going to marry Lady Margery Woodward, or go to the devil as far as I'm concerned."

"Perhaps it's the same thing, anyhow," said Dalton, who remembered the lady's reputation.

Brockham breathed heavily and glared at Dalton like an enraged bear, but something in Dalton's eyes checked his explosion of wrath. He spoke less brutally.

"The things I've done for that boy of mine! Pampered him, spent money like water on him, never refused him any fancy or freak, agonised over him when the war was on. Now he wants to marry. Well, I won't give my consent, and that's flat, Dalton."

Dalton remembered this man's almost hysterical anxiety about his son during the war. Every casualty list made his flesh creep. Twice a night at least he would ring up the office and say, "Any news about Harold's brigade?" as though all the rest of the massacre meant nothing to him, provided his boy was safe. Pitiable! Rather disgusting, Dalton had thought. Now he was going to smash the boy's hopes of happiness and coerce him into a marriage with a vile woman of exalted rank.

"For my part," said Dalton with deadly calm, "I would rather my daughter married a chimney sweep than your son. Not that I object to the boy, who seems a nice fellow."

"Then what's your objection?" growled Brockham. "I don't follow your argument. Some of your damned sarcasm, I suppose. There's another reason why it's impossible."

He hesitated for a moment, and then assumed his usual manner of the bully. Dalton was familiar with that expression of brutal resolution. He had seen many a poor devil quail under it when dismissed from his job.

"I've unpleasant news for you, Dalton. It's best to tell you without flummery. I've been displeased with your work lately. You seem to have lost grip. You've been trying to play the idealist and friend-of-humanity stunt. The paper hasn't got any red blood in it, any editorial thrust. It's all pap! Anyhow, that's my view, and I'm the one who pays. I've made Pinney managing editor. You can take a year's salary—I'm not mean—and get out of my show."

Dalton had a queer sense of surprise that he was not more surprised. He searched in his mind for a sense of shock and couldn't feel it. Pinney's hat in the hall had told him before he entered this room. Strange! He was a ruined man and yet perfectly cheerful about it. Something seemed to have lifted from him, an enormous weight, all the burden that had laid as heavy on him as an undiscovered crime. He was free again, as free as his son Frank! This big fat hunk of corruption was no longer his slave driver, his bully, his soul destroyer. There was no anger in Dalton now, only a sardonic amusement.

"Pinney will make a good editor," he said. "All-the-Truth Pinney."

"Well, I'm glad you take it like that. I will say I like a man who accepts a knock without whimpering."

Dalton shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not a knock; it's a liberation."

For a moment he had the idea of letting this man hear his contempt, his pent-up hatred. No, what was the use? Only a waste of nervous force.

He refused a cigar and a whisky, and picked up his hat and gloves.

"When does Pinney take over?" he asked.

"To-morrow night. I like these changes to be made quickly. That's my method, as you know."

"I know!"

Dalton went to the door, refusing to see Brockham's flabby hand. His farewell words to this man whose orders he had fulfilled so long were not friendly, but not violent.

"Your son will no longer be received at my house, and I shan't be a regular subscriber to *The Record*."

He went out of the room with a quick glance at the tall, heavy figure of Brockham, standing before his fireside, with his fat forefinger stuck into his waistcoat pocket over his enormous stomach. Before the door closed on him he heard the growling words of "That won't hurt!"

He did not drive straight home. After reaching London he told his man to take him to the office. He had many private papers to collect before Pinney took over, as well as photographs and little personal things in that room where he had lived most of his days for ten years.

Halfway up Fleet Street he stopped the car and hailed a newspaper boy. The light from a street lamp fell on the contents bill, and the words caused him something like a physical shock:

GRAVE NEWS!

IS IT WAR?

RESERVISTS TO BE CALLED UP

He struck a match in his closed car—the electric light did not work—and read five or six blurred lines in the *Stop Press*:

"Germany and Russia attack Poland. French Prime Minister in interview says, 'Grave situation. Six classes will be called to colours.' On inquiry at Downing Street official confirms possibility of impending war. May be necessary to call up army reserves. Advises public to remain calm, pending further information."

Dalton laughed harshly in his car. It looked as though the forces he had been watching for three years past had moved to the great collision. The smouldering flames had broken through the crust of false security.

If this were true, Europe would be a blazing furnace again, into which youth would be hurled by the leaders who had betrayed it—for the second time—by their ignorance, their lies, their fanning up of passion, their incurable corruption. Brockham was one of them, and Dalton, his bond slave, was another.

The office was deserted on this Saturday night. Only the cleaners and the firemen were about; the firemen who could never put out that fire in the heart of civilisation.

Dalton turned on the lights in his room. A tape machine in the corner was busy in its uncanny way, unwinding strips of paper on which came the messages of fate. He read one of them:

“Later inquiries suggest many officers on reserve already notified hold themselves in readiness. Great excitement in London clubs.”

That meant that Frank would be called up. He would not long enjoy his liberty in that cottage at Leatherhead. Young Brockham, too! All those who had escaped “the war to end war.”

For an hour Dalton sat at his desk in the lonely room, staring at the brass inkpot whose shining goblet had been like a crystal in which he had seen these forces gathering.

The telephone bell rang, and mechanically he raised the receiver. It was Brockham who spoke in an apoplectic voice.

“That you, Dalton? My God, this news! It can’t be true! I refuse to believe it! Harold tells me he’s had a wire from the War Office.”

The man was whimpering. Brockham, who said that he liked a man to take a knock without a whimper!

“My boy in another war! No, I couldn’t bear it! We’ve got to stop it, Dalton—at all costs!”

Dalton laughed down the telephone.

"It's your war, Brockham. You asked for it. You helped to make it. I hope you'll like it!"

Brockham was breathing hard down the telephone. The bully in his soul had collapsed into quaking cowardice, snivelling fear.

"Dalton! For the love of God! We've got to rally England against those madmen! Write a leader telling them to smash the government to hell if it dares to call for any more sacrifice of blood and treasure! Throw the whole weight of *The Record* against this homicidal mania!"

Dalton answered him again with that laugh in his throat.

"You forget, Brockham. Pinney is your editor now. I'm no longer your paid man, thank God!"

"Wash all that out!" Brockham's deep voice whimpered again. "Pinney's contract is unsigned. He's no damn good for this crisis. The mind of a drill sergeant. We want fire, idealism, spirituality—your touch, Dalton!"

Dalton grinned savagely at the celluloid mouthpiece. Fear had put this man at his mercy—grovelling fear. With cold, sarcastic words he dictated to him. He was willing to resume his position on different conditions. Utterly different!

"I shall want a new contract Monday morning; absolute editorial control; no right of interference in the policy of the paper by you or any of your gang, as long as the contract runs—and that will be for ten years. . . . Yes, I said ten years. Otherwise I walk out of this office in five minutes. You agree?"

Brockham gasped and gurgled at his end of the telephone. He pleaded and almost wept for less severity.

"Four minutes have gone," said Dalton. "You agree?"

Brockham agreed on the tick of the fifth minute. Dalton was the only man who could change the policy of the paper overnight. It would have a terrific effect in England. It might save his son's life.

"Another thing," said Dalton: "This afternoon I said I'd rather my daughter married a chimney sweep than your son. That's true! But if she likes the boy, it's her affair

and his. Will you leave it to them if I do my best to keep the country out of war? . . . That's settled then, when I have it in writing."

He thrust the receiver down, and, going to the window, opened it and listened to the murmurous noise of London as it came up from the streets, and looked at the glow of its myriad lights, touching the high fleecy clouds above Fleet Street and its alleys.

"Pray God it's not too late!" said Dalton, and then he gave a loud, harsh laugh because of his freedom to tell the truth at last, and the weakness of one man in the presence of world forces stirring towards conflict.

He had his new contract on Monday morning. But there was no war just then, after all. The Stop Press news was rather premature.

IX: A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL

IT was not a pleasant day in Hyacinth Grove, Fulham, and under a dark sky, or when rain is beating down on the refuse in its gutters—cabbage stalks, omnibus tickets, bits of newspaper which wrapped up the fish and chips of last night's revellers at the corner coffee-stall—Hyacinth Grove is one of the most unattractive streets in London. It may be mentioned to those who are unacquainted with this tributary of the Fulham Road that hyacinths do not grow in its pavement, and that there is no grove under whose verdant foliage lovers wander hand in hand. There are, however, several lamp-posts once painted white, if one may believe local tradition.

Sir Timothy Brandon, tenth baronet of Castle Brandon, County Wexford, Ireland, destroyed by Sinn Feiners in the troubles of 1917, and recently of Number Two, Hyacinth Grove, regarded the state of the weather through the broken window-panes of his bed sitting-room. They had been broken a week before, by a group of boys playing the ancient game of "rounders" with a hard ball. It was obviously useless to have them mended, because the game was played daily after school hours. In any case, Sir Timothy Brandon, being a sportsman himself—captain of the Eton eleven and cricket blue at Oxford, some thirty and odd years ago in time, but yesterday in memory—was not the man to protest against a ball game.

But the sight of the rain pattering against the opposite chimney pots annoyed him as much as it was possible ever to annoy a singularly good-tempered man. He uttered a mild oath with a slight Irish accent, which still clung to his tongue in spite of his English upbringing, and then carefully examined a pair of boots which he had just polished with a velvet pad. The examination was unsatisfactory. One sole was badly cracked and by no means weather-proof.

He heaved a deep sigh as he placed them back on the window-sill which served as his dressing table.

"Growing old, my friends, like myself!" he said; and then, as though reminded for the first time this morning of an important event in his life, spoke aloud again, which was a recent habit of his.

"My birthday, good Lord, and fifty-five to-day!"

He stood in front of a mirror, a little old Chippendale mirror, which he had saved with a writing desk of the same period, three Sheraton chairs, and a few other odds and ends from the sale of his belongings in his little flat in Duke Street, when he had had to move down a step, owing to the confounded pinch of poverty. Since then he had moved down other steps—from Duke Street to West Kensington—thence to a boarding-house in King's Road, Chelsea (far too expensive on his dwindling capital!), and now to Hyacinth Grove.

"Fifty-five to-day, Tim!"

The mirror did not lie to him. His face had become more grey and gaunt since that day a year ago. There was a streak of perfectly white hair above his forehead, though the rest of it was—well—not worse than grey in a dim light. His pointed beard which he trimmed so carefully, and his moustache which he brushed up in the old debonair style, were wearing rather thin since he had given up his favourite and infallible lotion for the sake of economy. There were new little wrinkles about his eyes, though they were still blue and undimmed, and—yes—with a smile in them still, thank heaven!

He smiled rather sombrely at this revelation of himself, and spoke an old Latin tag which he still remembered from his school-days:

"*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*"—How changed from that which he was!

They had called him Beauty Brandon in those days, when he was a clean-shaven fellow with the sky in his eyes and a delicate taste in fancy socks. The name had followed him to India, through the South African War, even to the fruit farm on which he had lost a lot of money in California.

Well, he was no longer Beauty Brandon, but a haggard fellow, in the sere and yellow leaf, very much the worse for wear.

No one had remembered his birthday. Not even Helen, who had been so faithful in remembrance, in wifehood and widowhood, after chucking him a quarter of a century ago—or more than that—for Will Fortescue. Perhaps she had written to the club? Yes, he remembered now that he had hidden this last address from her, as he had hidden it from all his friends. Number Two, Hyacinth Grove, Fulham! Rather low-down for Sir Timothy Brandon, tenth baronet!

He was in his underclothing, sadly in need of patching and darning. Perhaps he could get Jenny to do that, if he dared let her into the secret of his hidden rags. By extreme care and a real art of self-valeting, he was still able to present a respectable appearance to the outer world, though he was approaching the last phase of his scanty wardrobe. He pulled out from beneath the mattress of his narrow bed a pair of trousers which he had successfully pressed by sleeping on them. The crease was admirable, and after he had cut off a few loose threads where his boots had frayed them, they would still do credit to St. James's Street. He was bound to admit that, even in the grey light which came through his broken window-panes, there was no disguising the shiny elbows of his well-cut morning coat. Still, originally it had been a masterpiece of the best tailor in Conduit Street, and in the club, which was not garishly lighted, it not only passed, but was an object of admiration. Only yesterday that old buck, General Brandingham, had growled a compliment which was very pleasing, and devilish amusing, to Brandon's soul.

"You're always so confoundedly well-dressed, Brandon. Can't think how you do it, in these hard times. Suppose you made a pot of money on that fruit farm of yours in California?"

It was still a tradition in the club that he was worth a bit, and he was vain enough to keep the truth from them. Anyhow, he couldn't tell them very well that he slept on his trousers, and that he went without lunch not because of in-

digestion, but for reasons of economy, and that unless he could get an invitation to dinner—which was rare now because all his friends had been so damnably hit by war taxation—he slunk into a cheap eating-house in the Fulham Road, hoping to heaven no one would see him. Even then he had to be very careful in his choice from the bill of fare lest he should go beyond the ninepenny mark which was all he could afford. They wouldn't believe him if he told them that. They would think old Beauty Brandon was pulling their legs in his funny old way—"joshing," as they called it in California. They would roar with laughter.

Sir Timothy Brandon laughed aloud in his bed sitting-room at these thoughts of his, while he dressed himself and brushed the last speck of dust off his black morning coat. Then he coughed a good deal, until he had to sit on the side of his bed, rather exhausted. It was due to these boots of his, that fellow with the crack in the sole. Three nights ago he had walked home in the rain from Belgrave Square, after the reception at Lady Linton's—a long step to Hyacinth Grove, Fulham—and had caught the most infernal cold. He hadn't eaten much that day, either, counting on getting some food at Lady Linton's, but the stupid woman had offered her guests nothing but coffee, champagne cup, iced lemonade, and some light refreshments which he had been unable to obtain, not being one of the "thrusters." He had felt quite faint on the way home, and the influenza microbes had seized their chance. . . .

There was a tap at the door, and Sir Timothy, stifling his cough, called "Come in!" in his cheery voice.

It was Jenny with his breakfast. Little Jenny, the nineteen-year-old niece of Mrs. Wembley, his landlady, and the prettiest thing in Hyacinth Grove, Fulham, though her blue serge frock was grease-stained, and her shoes more down at heel than Sir Timothy's boots. A pale gleam of light through the cracked window-panes touched her hair as she came in, revealing the strain of gold in its brown coil. She reminded Sir Timothy—who had been a patron of art in his younger days—of a water-colour sketch by Rossetti which he had bought at Christie's—a girl's face, thin, with

high cheek-bones touched with red, and big grey-blue eyes and a bow-shaped mouth. . . .

"The kipper's a bit niffy," she said, putting a tray on the table and lifting a tin dish cover.

"Niffy, eh? You can't mean it, my dear? I paid fourpence for it in the Fulham Road last night."

"Fourpence? Then they cheated you, that's all. Saw you was a toff. I never pay no more than threepence at the little shop in Tod's Alley."

"Is that so?" Sir Timothy was startled and distressed. "My dear child, why didn't you tell me before? You know I rely on your wonderful knowledge of life in this neighbourhood. I shall be ruined, Jenny, if you don't help me."

Jenny giggled in a shy, childish way.

"You know you're always kidding me!"

"Not at all," said Sir Timothy. "I've the greatest admiration and respect for you, Jenny. You can cook a kipper better than any one I know."

Jenny blushed deeply at this compliment, but she passed it off with scornful words.

"Kippers! They're easy. Besides, your friends wouldn't want to cook no kippers. I wouldn't be surprised if they don't have mutton chops for breakfast, and all sorts of grand things, served up by butlers and footmen, waiting behind their chairs and all that. Like Lady Linton, f'r instance. Oh, I know all about her."

She gave a shrewd little glance at Sir Timothy Brandon, who was busy with the bones of his kipper.

"Lady Linton? What do you know about her?"

Sir Timothy was frankly startled—even a little perturbed. Between Hyacinth Grove and Belgrave Square there was a great gulf, crossed by a little bridge which he had constructed with most elaborate secrecy.

"It's all in the papers," said Jenny, though she said "pipers." "I read it in the one what wrapped up aunty's margarine."

She folded her hands in front of her rather grubby apron, and recited something she had learnt by heart. It was a paragraph from the paper.

"Lady Linton of Linton held a reception last night at her house in Belgrave Square. It was a very brilliant affair, bringing back the memory of pre-war days, by the splendour of the floral decorations, the glittering orders of the guests, and the beauty of the ladies' dresses. Among those present were the Duke and Duchess of Rutland, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, the Earl of Beauchamp, the Countess of Airlie, Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, and"—she laid great stress on that and—"Sir Timothy Brandon, of Castle Brandon, County Wexford, whose ancestral home was recently destroyed by the Irish rebels."

It was unfortunate that Jenny dropped all her aspirates and pronounced the word "duke" as "dook."

"Quite right," said Sir Timothy, "only journalists are somewhat inaccurate in the use of that word 'recently.'"

Jenny gazed at him with a kind of wonderment.

"Fancy you living in a 'ole like this, and going to them grand places, and then coming back again. It do seem a shame."

"My dear Jenny, it's a little hard sometimes, I admit, but not altogether unamusing, if one keeps a sense of humour."

Sir Timothy poured himself out another cup of coffee essence and drank it delicately, as though it had the fragrance of the finest mocha.

"Oh, sir," said Jenny, "do tell me about the ladies' dresses. Wasn't they beautiful?"

"Not bad," said Sir Timothy. "A pretty sight when the younger girls gathered together like a flock of birds. But I tell you what, Jenny, you'd look just as good as some of them, and much better than most, if you changed that old blue dress of yours for their white frocks. 'Pon my soul, you would!"

"Gord!" said Jenny, in a kind of whisper. "Ow I would love to! Even to take a peep at them through the area railings."

Quite suddenly, and greatly to the alarm of Sir Timothy Brandon, the girl put her apron up to her eyes and burst into tears.

"My dear child! My dear Jénny! What's the matter?"

It seemed that there was a great deal the matter with this child of Hyacinth Grove, Fulham, as she blurted out in a sobbing way. Her aunt was unkind to her and was always nagging because she didn't work hard enough, though she tried ever so hard. And her uncle, who was out of work, had been drunk again last night, and threatened to cut her throat, because he said her neck was too white for an honest girl. And the boy she'd been walking out with—Fred Chant, the grocer's young man—had "chucked" her because she had holes in her stockings and wasn't fit to be seen with him down the Fulham Road. She wished she was dead, she did!

Sir Timothy Brandon, tenth baronet, was as much concerned with the distress of this girl of Hyacinth Grove as though she had been one of those ladies who had come to him in time of trouble in that other world of his. That was his weakness. It was partly the reason of his poverty, for he had been foolish in generosity, even when he could ill afford it, to maiden aunts, blackmailing women who had traded on his tenderness, poor relations who had now forgotten him, the wives and widows of old comrades.

He patted Jenny's hand and soothed her as though she had been a small child.

"Hush, my dear! It's very wrong of your aunt, I must say! A brave little worker like you! And that uncle of yours—drunk again? That's dreadful. Threatened you, did he? Well, I'll talk to him. And that boy of yours—deserts you because you have holes in your stockings! The infernal young scoundrel! We'll teach him a lesson, Jenny. By Jove, we will! You shall go and buy yourself a new dress and new stockings—all silk, my dear—and the prettiest hat in the Fulham Road, and you and I will walk out together and flaunt your finery in the face of that impudent young monkey. How's that for a good idea?"

It was such a wonderful idea that it made Jenny laugh through her tears. She thought Sir Timothy was joking at first, and then went quite red and afterwards quite pale, when he pulled out his pocket-book and counted out three pounds in paper money—all ten-shilling notes—and spoke

to her in his wonderful way, as though she were a great lady.

"Do me the favour of taking those, my dear. It will give me the greatest happiness to see you in some pretty things. You've been very good to me since I've been here."

Jenny pushed the bits of paper back to him across the table.

"Oh, Gord, sir! I couldn't think of tiking it. And you so pore you don't get enough to eat, and looking thinner and thinner every day!"

"My dear child, I assure you I'll be vastly disappointed if you refuse. It's my birthday to-day. Now don't deprive me of this little pleasure!"

She stared at him out of her big blue-grey eyes with a kind of animal devotion, and then cried again and made his hand wet by dropping her face on it and kissing it.

"I'd work my 'ands to the bone for you!" she sobbed.

Her aunt's voice called from the kitchen.

"Jenny! Jenny! . . . Where is that blarsted girl?"

"Mop your eyes, my dear," said Sir Timothy. "There's your aunt calling." He squeezed the bits of paper into her thin, hot hand, and patted her on the shoulder.

"Don't forget! . . . We'll walk down the Fulham Road when you've bought those things."

Then he led her to the door and opened it for her, as though she had been a duchess.

A little later he sauntered out of Number Two Hyacinth Grove, with his silk hat quite glossy (after a rub round with a paraffin rag) and tilted at a rakish angle. He carried a book under his arm, one of the last of his most precious treasures which had been disappearing one by one under stress of hard times. This was an original edition of *Henry Esmond*, his best-beloved novel, with Thackeray's own signature on the fly-leaf, as he had written it for Sir Timothy's father. He walked down the Fulham Road, and then turned up to South Kensington until he came to a bookshop where he had been well known as a buyer in former days, and was now, alas! known as a seller.

The bookseller greeted him respectfully, for the sake of old custom.

"Good morning, Sir Timothy! I hope I see you well? Any little treasure for me to-day?"

"An old friend, Briggs. I hate to part with it. Look! The great man's own signature."

The bookseller adjusted his spectacles and examined the fly-leaf of *Henry Esmond* and that neat handwriting of its author, while Sir Timothy covered the business side of the visit by literary chit-chat.

"William Makepeace Thackeray. Ah! our modern novelists despise him as an old fogey, Briggs. He could write 'em all off their heads. He'd scorn their vulgarities and beastliness, their abominable indecency. He knew the ugly secrets of life—who doesn't?—and dealt with them truly, but always like a gentleman, Briggs. Always like a gentleman!"

"That's true, Sir Timothy. A gentleman of the old school—like yourself, if I may be so bold as to say so."

Sir Timothy Brandon blushed at this compliment, like an elderly woman who is told that she is beautiful. It pleased him. It consoled him a little for the awful wrench of leaving his beloved book behind.

Mr. Briggs was glad to give three pounds ten. It was a little more than the catalogue price, for the sake of the signature.

Sir Timothy had hoped for a better price than that, but he disliked haggling, and Briggs was fairly honest, he believed.

"It'll pay for Jenny's finery," he thought, "and next week's rent to Mrs. Wembley."

From South Kensington he walked slowly towards St. James's Street, by way of Knightsbridge and Piccadilly, quite a long walk for a man not feeling robust, and conscious—most damnably conscious—of that crack in the sole of his boot which had already made his sock damp again, so that he was seized with a spasm of coughing and had to stand for a while at Hyde Park Corner until he could get his breath again. It was then that Lady Linton passed in her open Daimler. Lady Violet, her youngest daughter, was

with her and pointed out Sir Timothy. Lady Linton turned with a gracious bow; and Vi, as he called her—he had nursed her on his knees in India—waved a friendly hand. Sir Timothy swept off his hat in his old grand style, a little out of fashion, perhaps, judging from the look of startled surprise followed by smiles and winks from two young fellows passing him.

“Your ladyship’s most obliged and most obedient humble servant,” said one of them, with irony, but his words were not heard by Sir Timothy, who walked on with an extra touch of dignity. In spite of Hyacinth Grove, he was still known in his old world!

There was another pleasure waiting for him at the club, that sanctuary in which he felt secure and unchanged among his old friends, in the old atmosphere.

The hall porter, who had been there for thirty years, saluted him with a deferential smile.

“Many happy returns of the day, sir! Begging your pardon, sir, for the liberty!”

Sir Timothy was much touched.

“Now, that is good of you to remember, Thompson! Yes. Fifty-five to-day. Getting old, like the rest of us, eh! How’s your good wife? Quite well, I hope?”

He liked these little human touches. Perhaps they came to him more than to others, because he took a friendly interest in those who served him. Anyhow, it was pleasant—charming.

“Several letters for you, sir.”

“Yes, quite a packet.”

In the smoking-room he sat down in one of the deep leather chairs and fingered them before opening a single one of them. It was pleasant to get the fragrance of kindly thoughts, the telepathy of old friendship, even through the closed envelopes. It was good to linger over handwriting well known or vaguely remembered, and to say: “Now who can that be?” . . . There was a letter from Kitty Broadbent, with the Simla postmark. No need to guess at that—and old Bill Challoner had written from Biarritz. His writing was getting a bit shaky. . . . The old dog must be nearing sev-

enty! A little note with a coronet on the flap—that must be Evelyn, bless her dear heart! But where was Helen's birthday greeting? Surely, surely! . . . Yes, there it was, in her little, fine, pointed hand, which had stabbed him to the heart twenty-five years ago—or was it a thousand?—when she had told him about her choice of Will Fortescue. She had been very kind since then. He was godfather to her first-born—young Will—and “Uncle Tim” to all of them.

Sir Timothy peered round the side of his leather-backed chair. No, there was no one looking while he put the letter to his lips, and then laid it on his knee under all the others, as the one to read last because best of all.

One letter was without a stamp or post-mark, and he opened it first, and was sorry he had done so, because it seemed to spoil things. It was a reminder from the club secretary that his annual subscription was one year and eleven months overdue.

The committee was unwilling to press him, as an old and honoured member of the club, but under Rule Fourteen they were obliged to remind him that it would be necessary to post him unless he sent his cheque without further delay. Serious that, and most insulting! He had been a member for thirty years. Post him, by God! He would send a formal protest to the committee, with his cheque, and some very strong language.

A cheque for forty pounds! It would make a terrible hole in that bank balance which had been dwindling for the last ten years, while he had been waiting for the stroke of luck which never seemed to come.

Forty from three hundred? Two hundred and sixty. With great economy he might make that last a year. Perhaps a little longer. He mustn't eat so much! He was a horrible gourmand, and it was absurd to eat so much at his time of life. A year, and perhaps a little more. After that, what? . . . God alone knew. Perhaps he might get a job. Secretary to a golf club—that would suit him down to the ground, and other fellows seemed able to get hold of such things. He must study the advertisements in the daily papers. Anything rather than leave the club. . . .

He looked round the smoking-room, with its panelled walls and its bookshelves, its portraits of soldiers and statesmen, among whom were old comrades of his, its pillars of sham marble, rather cracked and stained after a hundred and fifty years of support to this club of good fellows whose ghosts haunted the rooms, surely. Old Sedley, the little old Field-Marshal, and Bingham, and Broadley, and Halliday of Wharton—the best of England and of Ireland, in the good old days. His ghost would be here, too, when he passed, in this leather chair perhaps, fingering letters from gracious women, old soldiers—and Helen. If he had to leave the club there would be nothing left in life—his old way of life—but only Hyacinth Grove, Fulham.

Sir Timothy Brandon made a slight convulsive movement with his thin brown hands, and grasped the arms of the leather-backed chair as though resisting some force trying to pull him away out of this chair and out of the club. He would write that cheque for forty pounds before he went back to Hyacinth Grove. Forty from three hundred. Phew! . . .

Helen's letter was kind. She called him "My dearest Tim," and invited him to tea. She was glad his health was good, and she knew that on his fifty-fifth birthday his heart was as young as when they had first met at that dance in Calcutta. She felt older than that, though she was ten years younger. Sometimes she felt very old, because of the worry of things. Young Will was not doing well since the war. Didn't seem to settle down to work. And Beatrice was wild and troublesome. Sometimes she—Helen—was afraid . . . The children had no idea of money values, and she had to economise fearfully, owing to the awful taxes and high prices. She had given up her Daimler and only had a Ford now. "Come round and cheer me up, Tim! You're always the same old optimist! . . . Your affectionate Helen."

Sir Timothy Brandon abstained from lunch, it was not really necessary at his age, and at four o'clock he walked through Kensington Gardens to the house in the Bayswater Road where Helen lived with her boys and girls. He was glad she could still afford to live there, in spite of high taxa-

tion. So many of his friends had had to leave their old houses, in spite of getting rid of servants and making great economies. . . .

When he kissed Helen's hand in answer to her birthday greetings, he marvelled at the way she kept her beauty through the years, hardly changing. He told her so.

"You're as beautiful as ever, my dear!"

She laughed in that deep voice of hers which was the best music he knew, and put her hand up to her hair.

"See how grey I'm getting, Tim! Look at old Time's claws about my eyes!"

"Nonsense," he said. "Nonsense, my dear! I don't see a grey hair, and your complexion is like a rose."

"Love is blind, Tim," she said, and then blushed a little because of those words. But what was the good of pretending to Tim? She knew that he had loved her for more years than she liked to remember. Her true, old knightly friend.

Beatrice came in, the baby girl, nineteen last birthday, and astoundingly like Helen as he had first seen her at that dance in Calcutta.

"Hallo, Uncle Tim!"

She kissed him on the cheek and laughed when he said: "You're looking pale, you rogue! Too many dances."

"Yes," said Helen, rather gravely. "Too much dissipation in every way. I don't know what's the matter with the younger generation. These night-clubs——"

"We mustn't be too hard on youth," said Sir Timothy. "I remember the time when your mother said the same thing, Helen!"

Beatrice gave a shrill little laugh.

"There you are, mother! What did I tell you?"

But Helen's eyes were still serious.

"My mother would have died if I had taken the liberties which you do. Out half the night with strange young men—motor drives with objectionable people."

"Objectionable to you, mother! Not to me!"

Beatrice's laughter was a little harsh.

"Well, we won't argue, my dear," said Helen. "Cut that birthday cake for Uncle Tim."

Sir Timothy was persuaded to have two large slices of the birthday cake, and he did not refuse a third piece of bread and butter.

"You keep your appetite, Tim!" said Helen.

"I know it's disgraceful! I eat like a plough boy. Sheer gluttony, Helen!"

He could not conceal a shade of disappointment when, after a pleasant hour, Helen told him that she had to dress for a dinner that night—at the Grigsbys.

"You remember Arthur Grigsby, Tim?"

Lord, yes, he remembered him in South Africa!

"He's become as fat as an alderman!" said Helen.

Sir Timothy rose and kissed her hand again.

"Well, I must be going, Helen."

He had hoped to stay to dinner, but, after all, this had been a birthday treat, this good hour with Helen.

It was Beatrice who took Sir Timothy downstairs, to help him into his coat.

"What's your latest love affair?" he asked teasingly. "How many hearts have you broken since I saw you last?"

To his surprise, Beatrice caught hold of his hand and pulled him towards the little room on the left of the hall.

"Uncle Tim, I want to speak to you. Privately. I want to ask you something."

She shut the door when they were alone in the room together. Her face was pale, and she breathed a little jerkily, as though she had been running.

"Uncle Tim! I'm in an awful fix. I want you to help me."

"Nothing serious, I hope, my dear?"

He was suddenly anxious. He hoped with all his heart that this little one had not fallen into any kind of real trouble. Helen had been worried about her, as he had seen with his watchful eyes.

"I've been a fool," said Beatrice. "An awful fool, Uncle Tim! It's no good trying to explain. It was mostly card playing, and other things. I've been in rather a rotten set lately. Mother's right about that. Of course I ought to

have known better, but one has to learn. One of the men. . . .”

She could not get any farther, but a wave of hot colour flamed into her face, and then she put her head against Sir Timothy's shoulder and cried.

“Some scoundrel has been worrying you, eh?” said Sir Timothy. “Tell me all about it, little one. I'm an old man and your mother's best friend.”

He spoke very gently, but his voice trembled. He was afraid that something very serious had happened to this pretty child.

“I've been playing cards with him,” said Beatrice. “I owe him a frightful lot of money. He threatens me——”

“Threatens you, does he, the scoundrel? Let me know who he is, and I'll stop his threats all right.”

Sir Timothy's hand grasped his umbrella as though itching to thrash the fellow. If there were anything that put rage into his heart, it was when a scoundrel threatened some defenceless girl. He saw murder then, though as a rule he hated violence.

“If I don't pay him the money,” said Beatrice, “he swears he'll come to mother for it. Unless——”

Her voice trailed away into a kind of sob.

“Unless what?”

“Unless I give him something else instead of money. Do you understand, Uncle Tim? . . . He wants me to go away with him. He'd let me off my debt if——”

Sir Timothy spoke with horror in his voice.

“Great God! I'd kill him like a rat if I once set eyes on him. How much money do you owe the villain?”

“It's not very much really, but I daren't ask mother for it. You're the one person in the world I could ask. You've always been so sweet and kind. And you understand everything, Uncle Tim.”

“How much, my dear?” he asked again.

“Eighty pounds,” said Beatrice, with a little gasp.

“Eighty pounds!”

That was a terrible sum of money for a child to lose at cards. What was society coming to, when it could tolerate

such things? What was youth thinking, after its heroic spirit in time of war?

"My dear," he said, "it's a lot of money. Even if your mother were a rich woman, even if I were a rich man——"

"Uncle Tim, if you could lend it to me, I'd try to pay back one day."

"I'm a poor man, little Beatrice," he said, "a very poor man."

He could see that she did not believe him. What did this child know of money or poverty? He could see that she was disappointed—and afraid. She was afraid of what that man might do with this hold over her. A kind of despair was creeping into her eyes, this child's eyes, this little flower of Helen's beauty. Helen's child! Helen's child!

Sir Timothy Brandon had a queer sensation of old age creeping over him. He felt old and tired because of the shock of this thing. Eighty pounds! A lot of money, and yet not too much to save Helen's child from great tragedy—to save her honour, and Helen's happiness. Of course, he could not hesitate a single instant. He would be a most unspeakable cad if he hesitated for a moment.

"I'll write a little cheque for you," he said quietly. "But promise me you'll never see this man again, never let him say a word to you!"

She promised, with her arms about his shoulders. She would never play cards again. She would get some work to do. She would thank God every night for Uncle Tim.

He wrote the cheque for eighty pounds with his usual old flourish to the "y" of Timothy. If he'd had a bank balance of eighty thousand pounds, he could not have written his name to that cheque with a firmer touch. He blotted it carefully at the little desk in the corner of the room and, having folded it in half, gave it to Helen's girl.

"With an old man's love," he said, smiling in his gallant way.

She whispered her thanks again and kissed his hand at the hall door . . .

That night, after a dinner of sausages and mashed potatoes in a little eating-house off the Fulham Road, Sir Timothy

called for writing paper and ink. They charged him two-pence for it. His letter was to the secretary of his club. He regretted that owing to the grave international situation which had caused him certain losses, and the high taxation in England consequent upon the late war, he was compelled to resign his membership of the club to which he had had the honour to belong for so many years. He hoped that he would be remembered with good will, and that if he had ever offended any member by some idle word of persiflage, he would leave no rancour behind him.

It was nine o'clock before he returned to Number Two Hyacinth Grove. In the street a drunken fellow was knocking his wife about, and when Sir Timothy intervened, they both turned upon him with foul oaths. Letting himself in with his latchkey at Number Two, he went upstairs quietly to his bed sitting-room, lest he should disturb Mrs. Wembley and her abominable husband. He had hardly lit the gas in his room, before there was a tap at the door, and Jenny came in with a brown-paper parcel. She was immensely excited.

"Oh, sir! I've been and bought them things. I'll 'ardly dare to put 'em on, they're so grand."

"Let me see them, my dear. My word, that's something like a hat."

Sir Timothy spoke the truth. It was indeed something like a hat, but not much.

"What about Fred Chant, now, eh?" he asked.

"Oh, 'e can go to the devil, as far as I'm concerned," said Jenny, very haughtily. "A grocer's boy! I don't think!"

She put her hand on Sir Timothy's sleeve, rather timidly.

"You'll come for a walk with me down the Fulham Road on Sunday? You 'aven't forgotten what you said?"

"Not a word of it! Rather! We'll give them a treat down the Fulham Road. And we'll take a trip to the Zoo and feed the Polar bears."

"Oh, Lor'!" cried Jenny, with shining eyes. "That'll be a fair treat. You are an old dear, I must say! I'm so 'appy, I could dance!"

"I'm glad you're happy," said Sir Timothy. "Young

people ought to be happy. It's their right, by God's grace."

It was unfortunate that on the Sunday, Sir Timothy was too unwell to take Jenny to the Zoo, when she was all dressed up for him. He lay in bed that morning, and seemed to have a touch of fever. He didn't know Jenny when she came into his room, but called her Helen. Afterwards he seemed to be worried because he could not get into his club, and imagined that somebody was pushing him away from the door.

Jenny was frightened, and called Mrs. Wembley, who, after listening to his strange words a moment, said: "'E's been drinking, the pore old blighter!" But she became frightened too, when Sir Timothy coughed rather badly, and had a little blood on his lips.

"It's my belief the pore old devil will soon want a hunder-taker," she remarked gloomily. "Gord knows if 'e's enough to pay for 'is own funeral. You won't see *me* paying, I can tell you!"

Jenny was crying, and fell down on her knees beside the bedstead and made Sir Timothy's hand quite wet with her tears, as once she had done before.

"Don't be such a blarsted little fool," said Mrs. Wembley. "Go and fetch the doctor. I dare say this furniture will pay for that, anyway."

It was the doctor—a young fellow from the Fulham Road with relations farther west—who sent Jenny for Helen. He knew something about Sir Timothy Brandon, it seemed, and took the liberty of reading Helen's birthday letter which was underneath his patient's pillow.

"His friends ought to know," he said. "There's not a ghost of a chance for him."

Jenny was shown into the hall of the big house in the Bayswater Road by a little maid-servant who eyed her up and down with scorn before she condescended to take a message to her mistress.

When Helen came down it was quite a time before she could understand the message, because Jenny started blubbering about the gentleman who had been her best friend, and never a bit stuck up or grand, though he knew all the

great ladies in the land. He had always liked the way she did his kippers, and was that kind she could kiss the ground beneath his feet. Sir Timothy was going to take her to the Zoo——

“Sir Timothy!”

Helen turned very pale, and in a little whisper to herself said, “My dear old friend!”

She drove in a taxi with Jenny to Hyacinth Grove, and was astonished when it stopped before the miserable house in that gloomy street. She had had no idea that her friend had come down so far as this. He had hidden it from her, as he had always hidden his own troubles.

She stood by his bedside, shocked at the sight of him, in that poor room, with death visible in his face.

“Tim!” she cried. “My dearest Tim. Why didn’t you tell me?”

Sir Timothy Brandon raised himself a little.

He knew her at once, but as she had been many years before. For a moment there was a look in his eyes as though his own youth had come back, ardent, eager, as Beauty Brandon.

“My dear,” he whispered. “May I have the favour of the last dance with you?”

X: TURKISH DELIGHT

I USED to think Constantinople the most beautiful city in the world when I first saw it from the deck of an Italian ship in the Golden Horn. I held my breath a moment because of the vision of white domes, palaces, and minarets, between tall, spear-like cypresses, cutting the unclouded blue of the sky above the glittering waters of the Bosphorus, which were like liquid gold. . . . Well, it is not the thought of beauty that comes to me now, when I think of the city of Constantine, but the remembrance of the tragedies, passions, miseries of hunger and heart break, cruelty, corruption, and fear, which are overcrowded in the streets that wind narrowly up from Galata bridge to the heights of Pera.

Above all I think of a Russian girl named Wanda Sazonoff, so full of gaiety and pluck, whom I came to know a little in this human cesspool, not because she suffered more than many others, but just because what happened to her is an ordinary story that one hears between one cup of coffee and another in the Pera Palace Hotel or the restaurant of Tokatlin'. Anyhow, it reveals the strange and tragic melodrama of life which has been happening for the last few years and is happening now in this city crowded with exiles—Russians, Greeks, Armenians and Jews—uncertain of life, living from hand to mouth, disease-stricken, hunger hunted, and, lately, afraid of massacre.

It was young Irving Stoddart, on Harington's Headquarters Staff, who first came in touch with this girl Wanda, and was, as he confessed to me, enormously attracted by her quality of character. It was not in Constantinople that he saw her first, but on the island of Prinkipo in the Sea of Marmora, an hour away by steamer.

Stoddart was put in charge of the British arrangements for housing and feeding some two thousand Russians—the last refugees from southern Russia after the break up of

Wrangel's army—who at this time were being supported by the British Government on that little island. Stoddart was glad of the job because it took him away from the heat and squalor of Constantinople, where the only amusement for British officers was an occasional cocktail in the Pera Palace Hotel, a prowling round the Turkish bazaars on the Stamboul side—not a safe place for lonely soldiers—and a headachy evening in the cabaret of the Petits Champs, with Russian music, Russian dances, and a very mixed company of British and American seamen, Turks, Armenians, Arabs, Jews and Greeks, and girls of every known nationality, speaking every known language, and trying to save themselves from starvation by desperate efforts to attract the eyes of men. Rather boring after a bit to a young English officer like Irving Stoddart, with a country vicarage and two nice sisters in the background of his mind, and a decent code of honour in his soul.

The island of Prinkipo out there in the Sea of Marmora, with trees overhanging golden sands and little coves in which the water was crystal clear, and grassy slopes spangled with flowers looking away to the purple line of the Asiatic shore, was a paradise after the crowded corruption of Pera.

It was like paradise to Irving Stoddart when he and Wanda used to sit on one of these slopes together or in the shelter of one of those coves, talking about life, religion, the meaning of things, and laughing at the grim jest of it. This girl Wanda was always laughing. He marvelled at that because she had seen the fiendish cruelty of men and was familiar with the sight of death in its most revolting aspect, from typhus, from famine, and from hanging—the Whites as well as the Reds had hanged their political opponents with equal ruthlessness. She remembered also the luxury of her childhood vividly enough to contrast it with present poverty.

"You're wonderful!" he told her one day, as they sat alone like that on the edge of the island. "How can you face life as though it were a funny game when you've walked through terror and have no safety ahead? I haven't half your pluck. I'm afraid!"

"Afraid of what, comrade?" she asked, raising herself on

her elbow as she lay on the warm grass, and turning her head so that she could smile into his eyes.

She was a long, thin girl, very Russian, with black hair looped over her ears, and dark, luminous eyes, which Irving Stoddart, a shy fellow, found best to avoid sometimes.

"Why," he said, "I'm afraid of all sorts of damn things."

"What things?" she asked, without anxiety.

He did not tell her all the things which gave him a sense of fear. That very morning news had come through to headquarters that the Turkish Nationalists, under *Mustapha Kemal*, had smashed through the Greek line in Asia Minor. They were marching hard to *Smyrna*, driving a rabble of Greeks before them. They would not stop there. Soon they would get busy round *Constantinople*, where a few British battalions and some battleships would have their work cut out to hold an immense coast line, to say nothing of defending a city seething with excitement and revolt. Every Turk in it would be glad to cut a Christian throat. It would not be a nice place for girls like *Wanda*.

"I'm afraid about you," he said. "I've bad news for you, *mademoiselle*."

Something in his voice told her that he was not speaking lightly.

She sat up on the grass and touched his sleeve.

"Tell me," she said. "I have courage. Are we going to be turned out of this dear island? I have been so happy here that I knew it could never last. Life isn't made that way!"

He was startled because she had guessed so easily, and he nodded and cleared his throat, because of his own emotion.

"Orders came through to-day. *Prinkipo* is to be evacuated immediately. Most of the people here will be taken off to *Imbros*. Not such a health resort! A few will be allowed to go to the *Pera* side of *Constantinople*. I wouldn't advise it as far as you're concerned. It's not going to be pleasant, or—safe."

Wanda Sazonoff stared out to the *Sea of Marmora* with its little glittering waves and that distant coast line. *Irving Stoddart* could see that she had a queer smile about her lips, though her face had paled.

"Another chapter of life!" she said presently. "I shall be sorry to close down this one. This island of dreams has been so beautiful and so full of peace—after Red terror and hunger, and lice, and the agony of people in flight. It has been like a fairy tale here, with you as my prince, coming across the water, three times a week. Well, you will be in Constantinople. We will meet there sometimes. Perhaps more often, so that I shall look back to this island not with regret but as a place of exile where you came too rarely."

It was an open confession of love for him, yet because of his shyness he only blushed and tried to tone down the meaning of her words.

"It's kind of you to put it like that. I may be able to help you a little over there. All the same"—he hesitated and blushed more deeply—"I hate to think of you in Pera. Anywhere but that!"

"Why?" she asked, and then repeated the question, with a kind of urgency, as though she were angry with him because he did not like her to be where she could see him every day perhaps.

He repeated the name "Pera!" as though that word explained everything, as indeed it did to him. He had seen so many girls, Russian, like Wanda, and Greek, and Armenian, like other girls he had met, dragged down into the pits that yawned in Pera, though it was so neatly paved in the European quarter. Cabaret girls, waitresses in restaurants, dancing girls at the Petits Champs, earning a precarious livelihood by the entertainment of foreign officers and traders, who were out for adventure for a night or two, or a month or two, in this city between the East and West—how could they avoid those pits, into which at last, sometimes with despairing cries, they sank? How could Wanda avoid them, this girl with the laughing heart, and a beauty that had drawn him to Prinkipo far more often than he need have gone to carry out his duty?

She guessed what was passing in his mind. Perhaps his expression of that word Pera had given her the clue—all the disgust he put into it.

She smiled, with a careless shrug of the shoulders. "The

Pera end of Constantinople is no more dangerous than any end of any city. I mean for girls like me. I dare say there are dangers even in London? Are there not?"

"The risks are not so great," he replied.

"Oh, yes!" she answered quickly. "Just as great, I'm sure, for those who live on the edge of hunger. I'm not afraid of Pera. I'm not afraid of anything! Perhaps I can get a place in one of our Russian restaurants. Then I can earn a little money for my old grandfather. Let's go now and tell him the news."

She gave her hand to young Stoddart, and they walked back to the villa which she shared with other Russian families.

Irving Stoddart tells me that he will never forget that last evening he spent in Prinkipo. Many of the Russians there heard the news of the evacuation as a kind of death sentence. Others were like people shipwrecked on a desert island where they have lived happily in spite of all its hardships, and who repine when a ship rescues them and takes them back to civilisation. These Russians on Prinkipo after their flight from Bolshevik Russia had been relieved from all responsibilities, anxieties, and the ordinary struggle for existence. The British Government had fed them, housed them—in villas which belonged to Turkish pashas now with Mustapha Kemal in Asia Minor—and clothed them. They had had nothing in the world to do except talk interminably of old days in Tsarist Russia, tell for the thousandth time the story of their escape from the Bolsheviks, and gossip about the scandals, quarrels, love affairs, and social life on this island, where they still kept up their old caste and, with usual Russian fatalism, amused themselves with life as much as possible. Those who had a little money gambled with it, or gave feasts in a wooden restaurant that had been established near the landing stage. The younger folk danced to an orchestra organised by some of the men. They went for donkey rides in the island, made love by moonlight under the trees, and did not look ahead to the time when this pleasant exile must end.

That time had come. The news had spread like wildfire

round the island, after a proclamation had been pasted up in the restaurant. Outside the villas, groups of these Russians stood talking, with gloomy faces. Many of the women were weeping. Some of the old people—generals of Wrangel's army, in tattered uniforms, and poor old ladies who had escaped with them—sat outside the doors with clasped hands, and a look of fear in their eyes. It was the fear of people tired of wandering, too old to be uprooted again, afraid of the future.

As Irving Stoddart, in his British uniform, passed with Wanda Sazonoff, many people crowded about him asking anxious questions.

"When do we have to go? Is it true that we must go to Imbros? That fever stricken place! The British Government is tired of supporting us then? It no longer cares whether we starve and die! Why not let us stay in Constantinople, among all our folk in Pera?"

Stoddart answered them patiently, the same questions over and over again. He was glad to get inside the villa where Wanda lived and inside the room where her grandfather sat writing his reminiscences of old-time Russia, and of the Imperial Court, where he had been a great figure as Governor of the Kremlin.

Now in a peasant's smock such as Tolstoy wore, he sat on a low stool before some upturned packing cases, which served as a table, writing, with bowed shoulders over a child's copy book, in which he was telling the story of a life that passed, except for his living memory. He had a thin white beard which fell to his chest, and a leathery old face with a straight nose and high forehead on which there was a look of dignity and resignation.

Wanda put an arm about his neck. "Grandfather, we have some news to tell you. Not bad news, though it means another change of life."

"I know," said the old man. "I heard it a hundred times in a hundred yards. Prinkipo is worse than Moscow for gossip and tale telling."

He kissed his granddaughter on the forehead and looked at her anxiously.

"It doesn't matter what happens to me. I look back always to the past. But you belong to the future. With your youth. I am afraid of your future, Wanda. So many dangers ahead, so many troubles in store, my little one, and desperate poverty. What will you do in Constantinople if I am taken ill, or have to leave you?"

"Leave me!" cried Wanda, with sham indignation. "Why, grandfather, you're not going to run away from me?"

He shook his head, with a mournful smile.

"I'm getting old and weak. I may have to go before I write 'finis' to this book of memories. Then you will be left alone in the world. It's a wicked world for lonely children, my poor darling."

"It's a funny old world if you keep your courage and a sense of humour," said Wanda. "And don't forget I have good friends, granddad! You haven't said a word to Captain Stoddart."

The old man rose hurriedly and grasped Stoddart's hand. "I am always honoured when he comes under our roof," he said.

Wanda went into another room to make some tea for them, and when they were left together the old man spoke excitedly to Irving Stoddart.

"My dear sir, forgive me if I ask you to do me a little service."

"Any service," said Stoddart.

The old man hesitated and his leathery face flushed and then became pale again.

"Your Government," he said, "has been good enough to keep us here in some comfort. We had to declare ourselves destitute—paupers—in order to obtain their charity. In my case it was not strictly true, although actually I am ruined, like the rest of us. But I kept back something for my daughter's sake. Two little jewels, sir, in case of dire need later on. They are diamonds that have belonged to my family for many generations. They are worth something in the world's market—a few hundred pounds, I think."

"As much as that?" asked Stoddart. "That is a lot of money, sir."

He knew many cases of Russian exiles who had tried to sell diamonds to the Jew dealers in Constantinople, and had been offered miserable sums.

"They are good diamonds," said the old man. "Some of the finest in Russia, as the late Tsar once told me. I have been hoarding them for Wanda's sake. Hiding them as my last source of wealth, so that when I die she may not be left penniless in a world full of temptation and terror for poor girls."

He came closer to Stoddart and whispered to him.

"My dear sir, I want you to sell them for me. There are so many harpies who rob us poor Russians. And there are many thieves in Constantinople. If you will sell them and keep the money, and look after my little girl Wanda, so that she need not starve or sell her soul, I should no longer be afraid of death. It is perhaps a great service to ask of you. But you are an English gentleman, and you will understand and forgive a poor old man who feels the hand of death upon him."

Young Stoddart was touched with pity for this broken old exile. He seemed to have a foreboding of death, perhaps because of this order to leave the sanctuary of Prinkipo. No wonder he was anxious about his granddaughter.

"I'll do my best to sell the jewels," said Stoddart. "But I think you had better keep the money I get for them. I may not stay in Constantinople."

The old man said, "Yes, yes, you must keep the money until Wanda wants it. Perhaps"—he broke his sentence and looked wistfully at Stoddart—"perhaps," he said slowly after a long pause, "you and she might share it together one day. How happy I should be then, living or dead!"

Young Stoddart was silent and abashed. He confessed to me later that he wanted before all things to do what the old man hinted to him—to share life with Wanda. But with a staff captain's pay and a mother and sisters looking for help in an English vicarage, how could he ask any girl to link up life with him? In any case his immediate future was uncertain. There might be war with Turkey, and all

hell let loose again. Not fair on a girl to talk of marriage at such a time!

The old man said again, "How happy I should be!" and then, crossing the room in a stealthy way, stooped down and picked up an old top boot under some rags in the corner of the room.

"My hiding place," he said, chuckling. "My jewel case. This old boot, which has tramped many a weary league with me!"

He put his hand in the long boot, and felt towards the toe, patiently, with his thin bony fingers. Gradually the smile faded from his eyes and a look of terror crept into them.

"Strange!" he said. "Strange!" and poked about again in the toe of the boot.

Suddenly his face was convulsed with a look of agony, and he gave a tragic cry.

"My jewels. They are gone! Some devil has robbed me!"

He dropped the boot and beat with his clasped hands on the wall of the room, sobbing and groaning.

"The jewels I had saved for little Wanda! The safeguard of her soul and body! Her only heritage! O God, O God! It is taken from us!"

Stoddart tells me that the tears came into his own eyes because of this tragedy. It was not a selfish grief. The old man was thinking only of that girl who had held his hand in troop trains and farm carts and refugee camps, and whose courage had been greater than his in the days of the Great Fear, when he had escaped with her from the red tide of revolution which had engulfed this girl's father—his son—and her poor, terror-stricken mother.

But he marvelled again at the girl herself. She came into the room, hearing her grandfather's cries, and "did not turn a hair," said Stoddart, when she heard of the theft, but tried to comfort him with brave words, utterly regardless of her own loss.

"It's nothing!" she said. "Why, grandfather, what does anything matter so that we are together, in safety? I'm a

strong girl. I can work. I'm getting tired of this idle life, living on charity. We shall be happier in Constantinople when I get some good position."

The old man still wept, but became more tranquil later on, so that Wanda was able to walk down to the landing stage with Stoddart, where his launch waited to take him back to Constantinople. It was a lovely night, with a star-strewn sky and a luminous sea, still blue, and shining with phosphorescence where little waves came lapping along the shore. Lamps were alight in the Turkish villas where the refugees were housed, and through some of the open windows came the sound of children wailing, and through one window the noise of a woman weeping.

"The last night in Prinkipo!" said Wanda. "What fate lies in wait for all these people?"

"Queer adventures ahead!" said Stoddart, and, he thought, a lot of misery.

The girl looked out across the sea to the dark coast line beyond the glittering water, and spoke in a low voice:

"With a little courage one can shape one's own fate, perhaps. These people do nothing for themselves. They have sunk into fatalism. It's the weakness of Russian character."

"Not yours!" said Stoddart.

"I'm a fatalist, too," she answered, "but I have youth on my side, and I'm not tired yet like the older folk."

She put her hand on his arm with a caressing touch.

"How beautiful is life!" she said. In spite of all its misery she thought life beautiful.

He kissed her for the first time that night, down there by the landing stage, and as his launch went away he saw her figure standing above the phosphorescent sea. She kissed her hand to him.

It was a stroke of bad luck, worse for Wanda than for him, that Irving Stoddart was ordered on staff duty with the British troops at Chanak, on the strip of coast across the Straits. That was after the horror of Smyrna, when the Turkish irregulars set fire to the Armenian quarter of the city and started a massacre of the Greeks and Armenians, while hundreds of thousands of terror-stricken people

swarmed down to the quays, struggled madly for places on the boats, and in many cases drowned themselves rather than fall into the hands of the Turks behind there in that burning town, swept with flame under a pall of smoke which spread out above the sea and darkened the sky.

From that quayside came a cry of agony which chilled the soul of the world with horror and the warning of it caused a reign of fear in Constantinople among all the refugees and Christian communities.

Stoddart tells me that he never saw fear more visible and more infectious than among those Greeks, Armenians, Russians and Jews, who lived on the Pera side of the city. The fall of Smyrna, and the massacre there, seemed to them like their own death warrant, and their terror increased when the French withdrew from Chanak, refusing to support the British troops, surrounded on three sides by Turkish forces sent forward by Mustapha Kemal, who demanded a free passage for his troops across the Straits to Constantinople.

That city became a prey to sinister and terrible rumours. Not a night passed without stories spreading like wildfire that the Turks in Stamboul beyond Galata bridge, were advancing towards Pera, eager for the cutting of Christian throats, and that fire and massacre had already started along the Bosphorus. Some of the dancing girls in the Greek and Russian cabarets became sick with fear so that they could not dance. The wild night life of Pera, with all its vice, went on, but its artificial gaiety masked white-lipped terror, and above its strident music rose sometimes the shrieks of hysterical women. Only the British "Tommies" and the American seamen remained calm and stolid, although they knew more than the civil population how impossible it would be to safeguard so many defenceless folk if the Turkish population rose and the guns went off at Chanak.

It was into this city of fear that the girl Wanda came with her grandfather, in another boatload of refugees.

Stoddart met them by the quayside and took them in a horse cab to a lodging he had found for them not far from his own billet in the streets that go down behind the British Embassy. It was not a refugee shelter house, but a private

apartment, barely and miserably furnished, but clean enough. It belonged to some Israelites to whom he had paid a month's money in advance. It was as much as he could do out of his pay and more than Wanda wanted him to do.

"You are too generous!" she told him. "I will pay you back when I get some work."

He did not tell her that her chance of work was not good in a city over-crowded with destitute Russians—especially now that many of the restaurants and cabarets were shutting up because the British garrison was being drained in order to strengthen the lines at Chanak.

She laughed when her grandfather, looking very worn and frail, complained rather querulously that it was his duty to work for her and that she made an old baby of him. He still had strength enough, he said, to wait at table in some restaurant, or even to wash up dishes.

"A pretty thing!" cried Wanda, gaily. "The former governor of the Kremlin washing plates in a low eating house! No, we haven't come to that yet, grandfather. I am going to save the honour of the family."

It seemed to Stoddart the worst way of saving the honour of the family, and the gravest risk to her own, when on the night he left for Chanak she told him that she had obtained a place as programme seller in the Petits Champs music hall. The wage was small, but some of the officers were generous and she would make quite a lot in "extras." She hoped to make enough to keep her grandfather in comfort—at least enough to provide him with food.

Stoddart groaned, and looked at her with a kind of anguish.

"It's a frightful place! It reeks with vice. All those officers, out for adventure! Those Turks and Levantines without any kind of code! And you with your beauty. Good God!"

His distress touched her and yet did not make her frightened. She was so sure of herself.

"It will be amusing, and not more dangerous than other places. I know how to take care of myself, my dear, especially when you are near me to defend me from any evil."

He had not told her yet about Chanak. He had hoped to the last that he might stay on in Constantinople. But that very day he had received his orders, and he was crossing that night with other officers.

He told her then, in a broken voice.

"I shall not be near you, Wanda. I am ordered off to Chanak. If there's war——"

For the first time she broke a little and lost her courage.

"You are going away? Perhaps to fight! Oh, God, be merciful to women!"

For the first time he saw her weep, but when he put his arms about her she smiled through her tears and her caresses made him understand how joyful their love would be if Fate gave them any chance. Her grandfather had gone to bed in the next room and they were alone together until nearly midnight, when Stoddart had to leave. Before he went he tried to give her some money, two notes of ten pounds each, but she would not take them, and was certain that she would not need them.

"All I want is your love," she said. "That makes me rich."

They talked as lovers do in that little bare room in the City of Fear. Through the open window, looking down upon a Turkish cemetery with its white headstones among tall cypress trees there came the long, wailing notes of the Imam calling the faithful to prayer from a minaret in a mosque down there. From some back street near by came the sound of rifle shots. Some drunken seamen were reeling down the Rue de Pera, singing riotously. The rasping music of the Russian orchestra in the Petits Champs came in gusts on the quiet air of this Turkish night. But in that room none of those sounds broke the spell that love had put upon this boy and girl who sat in the darkness with their arms about each other, whispering. Stoddart had told me something of that, in his shy way, and with poignant remembrance, and self-reproach. I can't see that he has any cause for self-reproach. It was not his fault that he was ordered to Chanak and had to leave this girl to face the adventure of

life without his help. Not his fault that within a week of getting to Chanak he was carried to the field hospital, delirious with typhoid. But it was bad luck on the girl.

In that cabaret of the Petits Champs her worst luck was her look of freshness and unspoilt youth among so many painted, tired, and nerve-racked women. It attracted the eyes of all the men there. She was instantly distinguished among the women who sold programmes, and sweet champagne and cigarettes, and among the dancing girls—mostly Russian—who between the turns came to sit in the boxes with French, Italian, British, American and Turkish officers, and low-class traders, from all nations. They picked her out and spoke about her among themselves.

"She looks a bright little thing," said one of Stoddart's friends, pointing her out to me.

"Good blood, I bet," said another officer. "It always tells, even in a hole like this."

They liked her look of gaiety and courage, which she wore easily at first, but afterwards, when Stoddart did not write and things were getting bad, with an effort of spirit.

Things began to get bad after the first month. That wage of hers was not enough without "extras," to pay for the next month's lodging or for her grandfather's food, and the old man was very ill and unable to leave his bed. The Israelite, with whom Stoddart had placed them, fled from his house owing to fears of a Turkish massacre, and they had gone to a more miserable place, dirty beyond words, with lice creeping up the walls and a stench from the courtyard where refugee children swarmed and wailed, many of them stricken with dysentery and typhus. Wanda cleaned the rooms, made her grandfather as comfortable as possible, half-starved herself so that he should be nourished, but had to eat enough to keep her strength for those evenings when in the Petits Champs she had to look merry and bright and play her part.

She did not get those "extras" which one of her friends at the Petits Champs had held out as a compensation for low wages. They only came to girls who had no self-respect, or at least no other hope of life, and allowed themselves to

be fondled by men who had drunk too much wine or by any kind of beast. Not that they were all beasts. Some of the foreign officers, British and French, were just young men bored with this exile in Constantinople, and lonely without their own womenfolk. It was natural that they should have roving eyes for any pretty girl, and some of them were kind and courteous, and even chivalrous. But it amounted to the same thing. A girl could not get their money or their presents, or free meals from them, if after each performance at the Petits Champs she slipped back, like Wanda, to a miserable lodging where an old grandfather lay in bed and craved pitifully for her homecoming.

One of Wanda's Russian friends—little Countess Nastia—told her this with a candour that was meant to be kind.

"Dearest Wanda, you will starve to death unless you get a lover to support you. It's what we all have to do, whether we like it or not."

"I have a lover," said Wanda. "I will starve to death rather than dishonour his love."

The little Countess Nastia shrugged her shoulders.

"What's the use of him over at Chanak? You want one here, and could take your choice—English, French or Turk. They are all attracted by you! That young officer of Zouaves, *par exemple*."

Wanda laughed and shook her head.

"The French have abandoned the English at Chanak. I should be a traitor to my English lover if I made friends with a French lieutenant."

"The French are right," said Nastia. "They have done the only thing to save us from a Turkish massacre. But why drag in politics? I'm thinking only of your health, my dear. You're getting thin and pale. Why should you starve when half the officers in Pera want to invite you to their tables? It's idiotic! It's not fair on us others. It's as though you put yourself on a pedestal above all poor girls who take the luck they find and make the best of it."

"I have no blame for you," said Wanda. "Only pity and understanding. My luck is different. That's all. If I can hold out long enough I shall get a good reward. My

English lover and his home in England! Isn't that worth waiting for?"

"Not if you have to starve and die in a back street of Pera. What will happen then to your poor old grandfather?"

Wanda felt the pallor of her own face at those words. They asked a question which was already nagging in her own mind, all day long, and sometimes in sleepless nights. What would happen to her grandfather if she fell ill or died before Irving Stoddart came back from Chanak? The old man was unable to stir out of bed now, and was like a child, needing her help for every little thing. He was lonely and helpless without her and yet very patient and pitiful, because he felt himself a burden to her. The loss of those jewels had broken him, and he suffered an agony of fear and self-reproach because Wanda might be left alone, penniless, in a terrible world.

"I'm a useless log!" he groaned. "If only I could get out and do some work! My poor little one, it is hard that you should have to keep a silly old man for whom God has no more use."

"You have been my comrade," said Wanda. "Father and mother and brother to me. What should I do without you, little old grandfather?"

Never once did she let him see the fear that was creeping into her heart because Irving Stoddart did not write, and because her wages were not enough for both of them unless one starved. Why did she get no letters from her lover? Over and over again she went to the house of the Israelite in case he should have come back. But the house stayed shut up and barred, and perhaps under its locked door lay letters that would have given her hope and joy. He might have sent her some of that money which she had refused to take, so foolishly, so proudly.

She tried to send a message to Irving Stoddart and gave one to a young English officer who was going there, but a week passed and then another, and still no word came. Had he forgotten her? It was that doubt which crept into her mind and made her lose courage. Perhaps he had merely

played with her, like so many others with Russian girls in Constantinople, and then had gone away carelessly, glad to end an episode which might become embarrassing.

It was at that time, when her faith in Stoddart was horribly shaken and when she was weakened by under nourishment, that she came under the notice of Youssouf Abdul Bey, the most notorious young Turk in Constantinople. He was the son of a pasha who was one of Mustapha Kemal's cavalry leaders, and his mother was the lady Fatma, who was known as one of the most enlightened and broad-minded leaders of the modernist movement in Turkey. She was adored by the Turks in Stamboul on the other side of the Galata bridge because of her great charity to the poor, and her educational work among the women, and it was only the old-fashioned Turk, fanatical in adherence to the old traditions, who disliked her—hated her is not too strong a word—because she often went unveiled, and encouraged Turkish ladies to adopt the freedom of European habits. It was strange, perhaps, that such a woman—so noble, and so spiritual—should have a son like young Youssouf, who was a scamp, and utterly dissolute. A handsome fellow of twenty-two or so, it was difficult to tell him as a Turk apart from the fez. He looked more like an Italian of the South, and had considerable charm of manner when he was not abominably drunk, or worse still, doped with cocaine and other drugs which he had learnt to use among the Greek women in Pera. He was a familiar figure in the Palace Hotel and the most expensive restaurants in the Grand Rue, where he was always accompanied by Russian or Greek girls, upon whom he spent money lavishly if they happened to amuse him. He had a little villa on the Bosphorus where he entertained them—I heard many stories of "orgies" there—and a steam launch on which he loved to go at a great pace through the Golden Horn, frightening all the boatmen in their caïques, and a carriage and pair driven by a young Turk, in which he could be seen every day with his latest lady friend.

It was this fellow who picked out Wanda among all the girls in the Petits Champs one night, with a sudden pas-

sionate desire which was observed by many people there. He sat between two Greek girls smoking a cigarette and looking around on the audience with a bored contempt, until he saw Wanda. Something in her face, some grace about her, seemed to interest him. He sat up straighter and stared at her, as she moved about among the tables selling her programmes and cigarettes. As she came nearer he beckoned to her and she smiled a little and held out a programme.

"Not that," he said, speaking in perfect Russian. "I'm not interested in this idiotic show. I want to talk to you. Come and sit by my side, and afterwards we will go out and take a little dinner together."

He spoke to one of the Greek girls brutally.

"Get out of that chair. I'm tired of you. You laugh too much."

The girl looked as though she could kill him, and her eyes were not friendly to Wanda.

"The Turks are not yet civilised," she said, shrugging her shoulders, and not budging from her chair.

Youssouf Bey laughed harshly.

"Civilisation in Pera is the Turk's idea of hell. I regret I ever came under its refining influence. Anyhow, clear out, my little sample of civilisation. I want to talk with this lady."

The boy—he was hardly more than that—tilted the girl out of her chair so that she sat heavily on the floor, to the great amusement of the other girl, and the disgust of some American sailors sitting close.

"Sit down," he said to Wanda.

She turned from him in anger.

"I do not sit with savages!" she said proudly, and bent to give a helping hand to the Greek girl.

Youssouf smiled at her.

"You will come and dine with me," he said. "I like your proud sad face. It's different from the others. You have the beauty of a young lily. So white and exquisite. Let us go. This place makes me sick."

He rose from his chair and offered his arm with a gallant gesture.

"I am not at your command," said Wanda. "There are men here—even here!—who will protect a girl from your brutality."

He laughed at her, without anger in his eyes.

"I'm not brutal," he answered. "I don't command you to dine with me. I beg of you. I am a very humble lover of good women. You are good. How is it possible that you are still good in this place of infamy?"

She turned from him and went away, and he did not follow her then. But the next night he came alone, and she saw his eyes fixed upon her with a kind of ardent curiosity. She would not go near him, but after the performance found him waiting for her outside the gardens.

"Dear lady," he said, walking by her side, "do not think I'm lying when I tell you that I'm terribly in love with you! Can't we be friends and comrades? If you wish for anything I can buy it for you. I have a villa on the Bosphorus. It is yours! I have a little boat that goes like a swan through the waters of the Golden Horn. You are its mistress! If you like silk frocks, jewels, any pretty merchandise in Pera, you have but to choose, and I will lay these things at your feet in return for one kind smile. Come now, is that a bargain?"

Wanda did not want a villa on the Bosphorus, or a white launch on the Golden Horn, or any trinkets or toys. She wanted something to eat more satisfying than the roll of bread she had bought for lunch, and she wanted a few eggs for her grandfather, who lay in a filthy room, fever-stricken and very sick.

She faced round on the young Turk, and her eyes flashed at him through the darkness, where they walked under the wall of the Pera Palace.

"I'm starving," she said harshly. "And I have an old grandfather who is ill and helpless. What will you give me out of charity, with nothing in return, neither smiles, nor friendship, nor what you call love?"

He was startled by these words, and by her sudden demand. Perhaps beneath his rottenness there was some chivalry in this young Turk. I think there was.

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a wad of Turkish notes.

"Take these," he said. "They're nothing to me. As for our friendship, perhaps that will follow, without a bargain. *Au revoir, mademoiselle.*"

He thrust the notes into her hands and, turning sharply on his heel, went away from her.

Perhaps, with some Oriental subtlety, he knew that this gift without conditions was the best way of melting her coldness. That is possible. It happened that way, though I think he had a sudden impulse of chivalry. But with this free gift in her hands, that "extra" which she needed for very life, it was natural that Wanda should think more kindly of him. Every night for a week he waited for her outside the Petits Champs, but merely touched his fez and smiled and said "Good night!" In the darkness she looked back over her shoulder to see if he followed, but he did not shadow her. Then one day before noon he met her in the street as he was driving in his scarlet-lined carriage, stopped the carriage, jumped out, touched his breast and his fez in the Turkish way, and said, "Why not come to lunch with me? At the Pera Palace! Without conditions. I ask neither for smiles nor friendship nor love! Only your company and permission to look at you in the humblest way."

"I will come," she said. "With thanks for charity, but nothing else."

"No charity," he said. "A little waste paper."

He helped her into the carriage and she sat by his side and did not notice the amusement of the passers-by at the sight of her there with Youssef Bey. So this notorious young Turk had captured another Russian girl, they thought.

In the Pera Palace Hotel, Youssef's mother, the lady Fatma happened to be lunching with several other Turkish ladies, unveiled in the new style. Young Youssef greeted his mother with reverence, ignored her reproachful eyes, and chose a seat for Wanda and himself at the far end of the room.

Wanda was ashamed of her shabby frock and the broken

boots she hid under the table, but she was pleased to dine in this great room at a snow-white tablecloth with sparkling silver. It reminded her of old days in Russia before the world fell to ruin. A Cossack officer in his black uniform bowed to her, and then looked in a hostile way at the young Turk by her side, and again at her, with pity. It was General Tchichiganioff, who had been a friend of her father's. She was unconscious of the hatred in the eyes of the Turkish ladies with Youssouf's mother, who kept glancing at her from the other side of the room with daggers in their dark eyes.

Youssouf behaved well on the whole. He chose wonderful food for her, and was very courteous. They did not talk much, though once or twice he made little attempts at galantry.

"Your hands are beautiful!" he said.

"They're working hands," she answered. "We Russians are no longer afraid of toil."

"You have a great sadness in your eyes," he said later. "The tragedy of the world is in your soul. I understand it, though I try to forget it and do weak and foolish things."

"The Turks have piled up tragedy," she answered. "Smyrna will be written in letters of blood."

"Oh, Smyrna!" he said lightly. "That has been exaggerated. The Greeks were responsible."

She did not argue that with him. Some time later she answered him with simple candour when he asked her whether she believed in love.

"Not in your kind of love! You are a Turk, and you think of women as your slaves and playthings."

"That's unfair," he said. "We Turks have high ideals of women. But not in Pera! Not among European women—these vile creatures among whom I have been losing all caste and honour, and degrading my father's name."

"I am one of them," said Wanda. "A Russian girl for whom you have no respect, though you trade on their poverty and ruin."

She rose from the table and would have left him if he had not humbled himself to the very dust.

"For you," he said, "I have immense, immeasurable respect. For your courage and pride. You are one of those women who raise men from their beastliness. I reverence you as I do my mother, who is very beautiful in her soul, so that I am utterly unworthy to be her son."

God knows whether there was any sincerity in his words. He was a strange mixture of viciousness and chivalry, very decadent, and yet with some decent strain in him.

He made no attempt to keep Wanda longer than she wanted to stay and it was when he rose with her and left the table that a scene happened which was overheard by several English officers and a Cossack with them, so that it was repeated in the usual gossip of the Grand' Rue.

Youssof's mother, the lady Fatma, came across to her son and put her hand on his arm.

"You are disgracing me and breaking my heart," she said, in Russian, so that Wanda understood.

Then she turned to Wanda, with a tragic and hostile look, yet with some sadness and pity too.

"Can you not leave our Turkish youth alone?" she asked. "I understand your temptation and your need, but you have the English and French, and Greeks and Israelites. Are they not enough for your debauchery, your drugs, your wickedness? Before the war Turkish youth was uncontaminated by the vice of Pera. Now it is being poisoned in this city of sin. We Turkish women watch the ruin of our sons with breaking hearts. We pray to Allah that they may be saved from your witcheries. In the hour of victory our Turkish race is losing its soul because of the abomination of Christian women."

For a moment there was silence, while people in the room listened with open ears. Then young Youssof broke out into angry speech.

"It is abominable to insult a Christian lady in this public place! That does not belong to the honour of my father's name. It is an outrage against me!"

Wanda was pale to the lips. She did not answer the terrible indictment of Youssof's mother, of which she, at least,

was guiltless, and with a gesture of disdain passed down the room, unconscious still of the scorn and hatred in the eyes of those other Turkish ladies at the table by the door.

Young Youssof came running after her with a thousand apologies and emotional regrets. She refused his offer of the carriage and walked back alone to her miserable rooms where the old grandfather lay in bed with tired eyes which lighted up with gladness when she came in. He had been mystified, even scared with some secret terror, by the sudden wealth that had come to her—that money of Youssof's, with which she had bought new laid eggs, and tobacco, and some fuel for the room, and other comforts which she shared with him. But he was satisfied now. It was perfectly simple! God had been very good. Wanda was getting bigger wages at the *Petits Champs* because of her cleverness and hard work. So she had hinted to him, thanking God also. . . .

The only sorrow now was the silence of that young English officer, who had been so very kind to Wanda—so kind that the old man had indulged in day dreams, which he dared not tell her . . .

It was at the end of the tenth week after Stoddart's departure for Chanak that Wanda surrendered a little to the cruelty of fate. Youssof's gift had all gone now. Starvation stared her in the face, and she could buy nothing better than bad bread for an old grandfather who could hardly eat it. There was only one way of escape, and that was to a little villa on the Bosphorus, where Youssof would wait for her. There was to be a room for her grandfather. There were to be no conditions. Youssof himself would not go there if she disliked his company. Sometimes he would come under her windows in his little launch, or one of his *caïques*, and wave his hand to her, and ask whether she needed anything. So he said! So he said!

She accepted the offer at the end of the tenth week, and it was in Youssof's carriage that she drove her grandfather away from Pera to that wooden house on the Bos-

porus, where there would be food enough, and a woman servant, and dream-like luxury after the filth of that lodging in the back street.

Her grandfather was astonished and afraid.

"How is it you can pay for this new house?" he asked. "Where do you get the money? For God's sake, my little one, tell me the truth."

She did not tell him the truth. She did not undeceive him when a great light seemed to burst upon him, and he cursed himself as an old fool because he had not guessed that this good fortune had come from Captain Stoddart, that young Englishman, in whose honour he had perfect faith.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" he asked. "Why did you hide it from me?"

"I was pledged to secrecy," she said, hiding the tears in her eyes because it was Yousseuf Abdul and not Irving Stoddart whose house was to be hers.

It was a wooden house, with a flat roof and shuttered windows through which, when Wanda opened them, she could look down to the waters of the Bosphorus, with the British fleet lying there at anchor. In the garden was a little old mosque with a minaret, from which the Imam called to prayer at the appointed hours. This old man was also a shoemaker as well as a priest and worked in a wooden shed by the side of the mosque. Next door was another villa, belonging to a Turkish pasha who had been in the service of the Sultan and now lived there with the women of his harem and their daughters and servants. Wanda saw their faces at the windows when she went in and out, and sometimes saw their figures in the garden or on their balcony. On the morning after her arrival, she met three of these women under the archway that led to their villa and hers. They had their veils drawn over their mouths and noses, but their eyes stared at her, and she did not like their look because of its hatred. One of them drew back as she passed, as though the touch of her dress might carry some plague.

"They do not like me," thought Wanda, and she remembered the words spoken by Yousseuf's mother, so that a chill passed through her.

It was on the evening of that day that young Youssouf came to the villa for the first time. Wanda heard him blow the whistle of his white launch, and from the balcony she saw him steer it alongside the wooden landing stage at the bottom of the garden. He pushed his way through the tangled bushes and stood under the balcony and called to her:

“My lady Wanda!”

It was after the evening meal which she had had with her grandfather, who marvelled at the luxury which had come to them through the generosity of Irving Stoddart—as he thought! The Turkish servant woman, who could speak no Russian, and nothing but her own language, had waited upon them without a word, and Wanda had felt uncomfortable because of her silent way of moving about in Turkish slippers, which made no noise on the polished boards. For a moment, too, she had seen the image of this woman’s face in a mirror over a divan covered with a Persian rug, and in her eyes there was that look of loathing and disdain which had made Wanda shiver when the women next door had shrunk from her under the archway. Wanda’s grandfather had gone to bed, and this servant was clearing away the meal when Youssouf called under the balcony.

For a moment Wanda stood irresolute in the room, with her hands clasped. She had been waiting for this visit from Youssouf with a sense of fear. She could not put him off forever, taking everything and giving nothing. She could not live in his house, eat his food, be served by his waiting woman, and then treat him with such disdain. She would have to pay the price of her dependence on his charity. She moved to the window and went out on the balcony, and answered his second call.

“I am here!”

He raised his face, and she saw that it was flushed, as though he had been drinking.

“My white lily,” he said, speaking in Russian, “may I come up and enjoy the fragrance of your beauty in my own house? Or must I stand outside among these evil-smelling weeds?”

"It is your house, as you say," she answered. "I cannot bar the door to you."

"I want you to open your heart to me," he said.

"I am heartless," she told him, but he laughed down there in the glamorous twilight, and she could see the shine of his white teeth.

He moved towards the doorway, and she heard his heavy footsteps stumbling up the narrow wooden stairs. The Turkish woman listened also to the sound of those footsteps, with her head bent and a dark look on her face. Then she passed through the room and beyond a door leading to her own part of the house where Wanda had never been.

Youssof opened the outer door noisily and came into the room with his red fez at the back of his head. He stood there, unsteadily, gazing at Wanda, with passion in his eyes.

"How wonderful you look!" he said. "It is good to see you here in my own room. It makes this place adorable! Are you happy? Has my woman served you well?"

"We have been well served," said Wanda. "It is pleasant here."

She spoke bravely, but was afraid of this young Turk because of his flushed face and his animal look as he stood there swaying a little, in a drunken way.

"It's my own house," he said. "I am lord and master here. Not even my reverend mother has any authority over me in this little hiding place. It is here that I enjoy liberty and love." He came nearer to her, and took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Poor little Russian girl!" he said, with a queer pity in his voice and a weak laugh. "You're afraid of me! You even hate me because you think I'm a dissolute fellow, and a bad Turk. You see that I am a little drunk to-night, and that frightens you. . . . You needn't be afraid. We will sit on the balcony together, and I will make love to you under the stars."

Wanda was glad he wanted to sit on the balcony. The sound of his voice there would not reach her grandfather, and perhaps if Youssof was very drunk and silly she might escape from him more easily.

She let him take her by the hand and lead her out on to that wooden verandah which looked down on the Bosphorus, and the British fleet lying there. Lights twinkled on those battleships, and from a tall mast on one of them one bright light made quick little flashes with some message to watching eyes. She wondered if it told any news of the British troops on Chanak. If only she could speak to him by the wireless power of those ships and call out a message across the waters, to reach his heart. "Oh, my dear, if you do not come back quickly I shall be lost to you forever! Have you forgotten our love? I have waited so long, and now I'm slipping into the deep pit with a young Turk who has made me his prisoner."

She would have sent that message to Irving Stoddart, as her last appeal.

Yousouf sat at her feet, and took off his fez, and leaned his head against her knees, looking up into her face.

"Your eyes are like stars," he said. "The beauty of your face has the shining whiteness of the crescent moon."

His European manners and way of speech learnt in the social life of Pera fell from him in this velvet darkness of an Oriental night. He was the Turk, with the poetry and the passion of his race. Wanda shivered, and he felt the coldness of her hands and warmed them between his own, which were hot.

He raised his head impatiently when the servant woman came on to the verandah and spoke in Turkish. She carried a small box in her hands and smiled towards Wanda and then laid it in her lap.

"What is it?" asked Wanda.

Yousouf untied a silken string which fastened the paper box.

"Your beauty makes you beloved wherever you are seen," he said. "The ladies next door have sent you this gift of sweetmeats for the beautiful Christian lady, with their good wishes."

He spoke again to the servant woman, who smiled and left the verandah, as noiselessly as she had come.

"It is kind," said Wanda.

She thought it strange also, because this gift was from women who had shrunk from her when she passed them, and had no friendly light in their eyes.

"Give me one," said Youssof. "I am a baby with sweetmeats, and they will taste like nectar from your dear fingers."

She opened the box for him, and he took a little square of that sweetmeat which is called "Turkish Delight."

"Take one," he said. "It's good."

She took one, but in a few moments let it drop on to the floor beside her chair, because he had touched it first.

Youssof spoke of love again, and said that Turks loved women with greater reverence than Christians. It was because of this respect that Turkish families who kept the old tradition did not allow their women to expose themselves to the public gaze and show their beauty to any man who cared to gaze upon them.

"There's something to be said for that," said Youssof. "I have abandoned the old-fashioned habits of my people, and I have had amorous adventures with many Christian women, but deep down in my soul all the time is the old jealousy, the old instinct that the woman I really love must be unseen by other men, and kept spotless from the world."

"That is slavery for the woman," said Wanda.

Youssof ate another sweetmeat, smiling into Wanda's eyes.

"Not slavery," he said, "only the sweet captivity of perfect love."

He put his hands up and clasped her head, and pulled it down towards his face.

"You and I," he said, "could love like that. I'm going to make you love me like that, so that this little house will be your paradise. The door will be open always, but you will not wish to escape. You will have perfect liberty, but you will stay here, utterly happy, scornful of the outside world, desiring no other company but mine. Then I will come to you every day, on fire with love, as I am now on fire—as I am—now—on fire!"

He rose a little on his knees, and his breath was hot, and

his face flushed, as Wanda could see in that glamorous darkness. He put his hand on her chair, and stood up, unsteady, swaying above her.

"Oh, my love——!" he said.

He took a step forward with his hands outstretched, and Wanda shrank back in the chair.

Suddenly he staggered and gave a cry.

"I am on fire!" he said. "This love is burning me—burning!"

He put both hands to his head and lurched backwards on the verandah, and then fell with a dreadful crash, over a little table which was used for coffee.

He lay there writhing, and twice called out the name of Allah.

Wanda rushed towards him and knelt down by his side. He was in a kind of convulsion, and his face was hideously distorted. He tore at his throat, and then, quite suddenly, lay still, and dead.

Wanda gave a cry of fear, loud and piercing, and at the sound of it the servant woman came on to the verandah, and she, too, gave a loud, wailing cry.

Suddenly she made a swift movement. She seized the box of sweetmeats which had been sent as a gift from the ladies next door, and threw them over the balcony into the weed tangled garden. Then she turned upon Wanda like a wild animal and tried to tear her face with claw-like hands.

Wanda flung the woman away from her, so that she fell in a heap at the end of the verandah.

A quiet voice spoke from the doorway leading from the inner room.

"Did you call to me, Wanda?"

It was the old grandfather standing there in his nightshirt, with a shawl over his shoulders. His thin white beard was touched by moonlight, and below the nightshirt his old limbs trembled.

"Grandfather!" said Wanda. "We must go away. Now! This house is not safe for us. Be quick, grandfather! Get into your clothes! For God's sake!"

He could not understand. But he was frightened, because of Wanda's fear. It was the first time he had seen her afraid.

She helped him dress, saying, "Be quick, be quick!" and, taking him by the hand, led him out of the house, where Youssef lay dead on the open verandah. That night they wandered about the streets of Pera until the old man could walk no more, and lay down with Wanda's arm about him, in the doorway of a Greek house.

It was there that they were found by an English officer in charge of a patrol of military police. It was a friend of Stoddart's and of mine, Lieutenant Fortescue, of the "Buffs."

He was shocked at the sight of this girl with the old man, homeless in the streets, and took them to a shelter house for refugees. Better than that, he found out the whereabouts of Irving Stoddart, and it was through his chivalry and a word to his general that Stoddart was brought back from one of the islands to which he had been sent for convalescence. So he saw Wanda again.

Of that meeting I shall not write a word, though I have heard from Stoddart enough to know the joy of it, and the agony of his self-reproach. After that illness at Chanak he had been too weak to write a letter to the girl who was desperate for news of him. That seems to me good enough excuse, but even now, knowing the story of her struggle, he blames himself for some of the misery she endured.

She came to England as his wife a few months ago, after the evacuation of Constantinople by the Allied troops. Her poor old grandfather lies in the Christian cemetery of Pera, among many other exiles of his race, happy in his last hours because the girl was safe at last, and no longer menaced by the perils that lie in wait for Russian refugees in a cruel world.

Wanda and I are good friends. She has told me the things I have written here with a gaiety that forgets their tragedy. But, as she says, her escape was a lucky chance, and in Constantinople there are thousands of Russian girls who cannot count on luck.

XI: THE GAME OF POVERTY

I AM sorry now that I didn't travel second class on the *Aquitania*, where I should have enjoyed the companionship of a very decent crowd of nobodies with more ideas than dollars, instead of taking a first-class berth and mixing up with millionaires, celebrities of the motion pictures, Russian dancers, American bankers, international financiers, commercial travellers in a big way of business, newspaper proprietors, theatrical stars, Foreign Office gentlemen, society beauties and Janet Brandt, whose desire for the simple life led me into great trouble.

I regretted having bought that first-class berth when I saw Paul Hirst standing below the second-class gangway with an old leather kit-bag dumped beside him and a wad of American magazines under his arm.

He stood watching the crowd of passengers seething into the great ship as once I had seen him staring across a field in Flanders where death was having a great time, with a look of intense sadness in spite of a little ironical smile twisting the corner of his thin lips as though in mockery of life. I knew and liked the bitterness that sometimes gave a biting edge to this boy's spoken thoughts, for it was in revolt against the world's cruelty and revealed hatred of injustice and sham, sometimes too sharply, as is the way of youth before it gets tolerant by knowledge of self.

They were bitter words he spoke when I clutched hold of his arm and said: "I'd no notion you were going back in this little tub!" He stared at me for a moment without recognition, because he was in intense contemplation of the crowd about him. Then he gave a nervous, boyish laugh, and answered me:

"Dives and his dancing women won't be bothered with Lazarus behind the second-class barrier."

"My dear lad," I told him, "Lazarus won't be parched for a cup of cold water in the second class of this ship. It's the lap of luxury."

"Yes," he said in self-contradiction; "and I'm sick of luxury! I'd like to be going back steerage. Poverty is clean and real. After six weeks of New York hotels, at other people's expense, I'm fed up with marble pillars—mostly sham—with painted hussies dancing to jazz bands, the stench of over-rich crowds, and the damned callousness of those who have the dollars, while those who haven't get broken on the wheel of life."

"Is that how America strikes you?" I asked. "It's a rather superficial view, isn't it, and a bit ungenerous?"

His pale face flushed a little, and he gave his nervous laugh.

"Oh, I know! I like the people. But too many of 'em are too rich, and American luxury is revolting. Especially when half the world is starving."

"You're a Bolshevik!" I said, and he grinned at me and replied:

"I'm a cankered soul, but not that."

I asked after his sister Pat—Miss Madcap—who had led me a rare dance one night in Paris, when she was out for any kind of fun like a wood nymph in a forest glade, though we were in the Place Pigalle when peace was declared.

"Still safe!" said Paul Hirst, laughing at the thought of a girl who kept his rooms untidy and his sense of humour bright. "At least she hasn't cabled that she has run off with an *apache*, or any little escapade like that."

"She'll be glad to get you back," I told him, and I saw by the look in his eyes that his heart had bridged the Atlantic and was back in the Rue de la Pompe, where that sister of his teased him until he pulled her hair and made her squeak; interrupted his work (which was a writer's job) by introducing casual and disreputable friends; made omelettes which were wonderful when they did not get burned on the gas stove, and went on short rations with unbroken gaiety when funds were low, as often happened.

"Not so glad as I'll be to hear her impudence," said Paul.

Those were the last words I could have with him before getting aboard at the warning note of the ship's bell and the shouts of "all visitors ashore." I waved to him over the first-class gangway, and then saw him from D deck as he went into his part of the ship, where he would be divided from me by impassable barriers of snobbishness and etiquette.

It was then that I saw Janet Brandt and her alarming aunt—alarming in spite of graciousness, because of the homage which she expected and obtained from all who knew her supreme position in the social world of America. I noticed how even there, on the *Aquitania* at the hour of starting, when all the first-class passengers were surging from deck to deck in search of cabins, baggage and stewards, with the first excitement of discovery and adventure, a clear passage was made by common consent when Miss Alice Brandt, with her niece, her two maids, and the bedroom steward, advanced to their suite on A deck. So I have seen crowds fall back with reverence when Queen Mary has passed among them across the lawns of Buckingham Palace. Behind the party two deck stewards carried enormous bouquets of hothouse flowers, sent aboard as farewell tributes, and a fat stewardess waddled after them with cardboard boxes, obviously filled with similar beauty.

Several elderly gentlemen bowed to Miss Alice Brandt as she passed by them, and one of them, whom I knew by sight as the president of a great commercial house of the Middle West, had the confidence to say in a hearty voice: "Delighted to see you on this ship, Miss Brandt!"

Only by the slightest nod, which hardly disturbed the long osprey feather of her hat, did Miss Brandt acknowledge this salutation. I had not even that privilege, for when I found myself in the icy light of her grey eyes and bowed in remembrance of a dinner she had been pleased to give "in my honour," as she had very graciously said, she looked through me and beyond me, as though I were utterly transparent.

"That will save me future trouble," I thought, knowing the

social strains of an Atlantic voyage; but at the same moment Janet Brandt caught sight of me, and gave me such a bright smile of recognition, so friendly in greeting, that I revised my opinion and decided to render homage to the aunt, in order to enjoy a chat with the niece. Not the first one, for at that dinner party in Fifth Avenue we had talked about books and plays, and I had been surprised by the intelligence of the girl when she got the better of a painful shyness. She even showed signs of a sense of humour, which might well have been stifled by the overwhelming luxury of her position and surroundings.

"Who are they, I wonder?" said an unmistakably English voice behind me; "Madam Whoever-she-is looks as though she owned the ship!"

"She easily could, that's sure," answered an American. "Miss Alice Brandt holds most of the old man's property in trust for that niece of hers, who will be one of the richest young women in New York one of these days."

"Oh, the Brandts!" said the English voice, and there was a note of respect in it, as at the mention of one of the reigning houses of Europe before crowns were cheap.

There was the usual restlessness of passengers identifying their baggage piled up on D deck outside the golden gates of the elevator, collecting cables sent from shore, sending off wireless messages, arranging their dinner tables with the chief steward, or wandering about the ship from garden lounge to drawing-room, from library to smoking-room, astonished at the immensity and luxury of this sea-going palace in which they had bought a seven-days' share. There were the usual meetings of unexpected friends and acquaintances marked down for avoidance.

"Hallo, you here? I thought you were going in the *Adriatic*."

"Didn't I meet you at the Dutch Treat Club?"

"What's the number of your table? Oh, hard luck! I shall be a mile away from you."

The morning promenade up A deck or B was like a walk up Fifth Avenue in the season. It seemed to me that the *Aquitania* was filled with every one I had ever met in Lon-

don and New York, and it was only by sneaking away to one's state-room that one could avoid the incessant strain of conversational episodes with all these people who had nothing to do but talk, until some of them settled down to endless bridge parties; talk about German reparations—could they pay and would they pay; about the collapse of the European markets; about American policy under the new president—could they afford to “stay out,” or would they be forced to “come in”; about the new ambassador to London, the bankruptcy of Poland, the Bolshevik peril from Russia, the spiritual downfall of many peoples demoralised by war. These people talked well, and as I paced the decks hour after hour with big financiers, big business men, big newspaper men, I was enormously impressed by their sincerity, their anxiety, their breadth of view, their desire to help the world out of the awful mess into which it had plunged headlong. I was enormously impressed, and utterly weary of all such talk, because I had been talking it myself since the ending of the war, and there was nothing new to hear or to say about this tragedy of history. I wanted to get away from it awhile, to hear the laughter of youth rather than the lamentations of old age, which was mostly guilty of this state of things, and to talk pleasant nonsense rather than reiterate dreadful realities.

My table companions were a relief for that reason. They chattered splendid foolishness, and we laughed outrageously at small jests like a pack of babies. Yet they were babies with a knowledge of life's brutalities, tears and agonies, and this childishness was deliberate and philosophical.

So, at least, it must have been with little Sonia Recochevitz, the Russian dancer, who had escaped from the Bolsheviks after frightful adventures before coming to New York, and who had had other adventures of an amorous kind, not unmingled with tragedy, if gossip did not lie.

Yet she was wonderfully gay, with a natural playfulness which was communicated even to inanimate objects like her table napkin, which became, by a touch of her fingers, a white kitten, a lop-eared rabbit, a dancer like herself, with fantastic little steps to the music of the orchestra. She told us

Russian fairy tales, like a child who believed every word of them and was frightened of her own bogeys, and made up comical little stories of her own about the people at tables near us, who wondered at our glances and our gusts of hilarity.

"Her mind has not grown up," I thought for a while, until one or two things she said revealed sad understanding of life. Once she whispered to me as the others were laughing very heartily at some jest of hers: "We are like the people of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Do you remember how, when plague was raging, they made merry company and put the thought of death away by naughty stories? Our world is plague-stricken—dying—and it's well to laugh lest we should weep too much!"

At our table sat a young Irishman, famous in America as a producer of motion pictures into which he put a sense of art and a strange reality of emotion. This Dennis O'Calloran played with words and thoughts in the drollest way, and was a very good mimic of any personality which amused him, which was not rarely. He seemed without a care, and happy in the success that had come to him after years of miserable poverty in New York, and I confess I thought him an empty-headed fellow until one night he stayed for hours in my cabin talking of the civil war in Ireland with a passionate emotion and idealism for which he was prepared to sacrifice all he had gained. He was coming back to enlist as a recruit in the Irish Republican Army, unless the British Government called off the Black-and-Tans and made a fair offer of liberty. I argued with him long and earnestly, put England's point of view as well as I knew how, but could not damp down the blazing fire in his soul when he spoke of the heroic struggle of his people for their dream of freedom. His pale face flushed as he talked, and a long lock of black hair fell over his forehead; and the whole aspect of the man was changed from that light-hearted table companion whom I had admired only as a humourist with an actor's talent of grotesque mimicry.

That evening, at dinner, he was in his best form, and his impersonations of "movie" stars rehearsing a new production

made little Sonia Recochewitz laugh until she wept, and our two other table partners, who happened to be young Viscount Mickleham of the Foreign Office and his sister Beatrice, burst into such loud peals of mirth that I think we were rather a scandal in the dining saloon, and our respectability was only saved by Mickleham's title and position, for neither of which did he care one straw. I noticed angry glances about us from old fogeys at other tables, but then was caught by one glance which was not hostile, but amused and envious.

It was when I met the eyes of Janet Brandt, who was sitting at a table placed rather separately and aloofly in an alcove on the captain's side of the saloon. She was much too far from us to hear a word of our nonsense, but the sound of our laughter reached her, and perhaps she had seen O'Calloran's funny faces. She watched us with intent, smiling eyes, and, as I have said, there was a look on her face of wistful envy, as though she would have given much to join our party. She was startled when our eyes met, as if she had betrayed some secret, and a second later she answered some remark of her aunt demurely.

Miss Alice Brandt wore some of her famous diamonds, and even across the spacious dining saloon of the *Aquitania* I saw the glint of them in her hair and round her long, thin neck. She sat very straight; an elegant, austere lady who must have been beautiful in her youth when she came up from Georgia as the sister of Jonathan K. Brandt, already founding the great fortune of his house and family. She had two guests at her table, one of them being George Hecht, the great financier, and the other a little fat old lady, scandalously *decolletée*, with artificial roses on her cheeks, who was doubtless Mrs. George Hecht. Not an amusing company for Janet, aged twenty, I guessed. They would talk about the cuisine on the *Aquitania*, with a little gossip about the passenger list, unbrightened by any glint of humour, and then, perhaps, discuss the disadvantages of Continental travel and the lack of sanitation in France and Italy. No wonder the girl had a stifled look, a wistfulness for some of the fun of youth, a desire, sometimes peeping through shy-

ness and fear, as I thought I had seen, to escape from smugness.

Mickleham saw where my eyes were straying, and grinned at me.

"Not a chance, old friend! The man who marries Janet Brandt will certainly be very rich, but he must also be very respectable, and offer a famous name in return for the millions. That's the idea in taking her to Europe."

"What about you?" I asked. "Viscountess Mickleham doesn't sound bad, and—you're a pretty fellow!"

"Yes, but not respectable," said his sister Beatrice.

"Mine is a family without morals or intelligence," said Mickleham, with mock sadness. "My sister Beatrice drinks three cocktails before luncheon. That is merely a modern way of revealing inherited tendencies. We have always grabbed at the fun of life and risked the headache or the executioner's axe. Hence our poverty. Bad, indeed, but not undeserved!"

In going to my cabin that evening, I found a little note on the dressing-table. It was from Miss Alice Brandt, who graciously invited me to dine at her table on the following evening. "My niece," she added, "will be equally pleased." So, in spite of gazing at me as though I were as transparent as a window-pane, the lady had condescended to be aware of my presence on board, and to distinguish me from the great horde who were enchanted by a nod from her. I wondered what had caused me to be favoured in that way. I think it was Miss Janet's favour which had brought me the invitation; but certainly, on the following evening, when I was extra careful with my dress tie and chose my very best cuff-links of imitation gold, in deference to the Brandt diamonds, the aunt was exceedingly gracious, and more talkative than the niece. I learnt that she had taken a house in Paris—Avenue Victor Hugo, of course—and she hoped I would spare time to call on them, and perhaps take Janet to see the right things.

"Picture galleries, museums, and such like?" I suggested, and Miss Alice Brandt said: "You know them so well, I'm

sure it would be a privilege for Janet"; but looking over at the niece I thought I saw a wish for something more exciting than picture galleries and museums; and she guessed my thought, for she smiled and then blushed.

"I would like to see something of life in Paris," she said; and she spoke that word "life" as though it held a great adventure.

"Undoubtedly, my dear," said Miss Alice Brandt; "we're not going to be hermits, I assure you. The ambassador will bring us all the people worth knowing, and we have many friends over there already. The Hepworth Hobsons are there, the Brixhams of Milwaukee, the Comton Wackfords of Boston, and half New York."

"Yes; but, Aunt Alice," said Janet, "those people are so familiar—and so rich. I want to get a glimpse of people who live cheaply and have all the fun, it seems to me. The young people who make a game of life."

Miss Alice Brandt was undoubtedly startled by this queer outburst. She looked at Janet with shrewd eyes, not unkindly, but searchingly; and the girl avoided that gaze by fiddling with a trinket at her wrist.

"I'm sorry you're tired of old friends, Janet," said Miss Brandt. "Some of them, I admit, are wearisome if one sees too much of them. However, there are young people in Paris who will be welcome to our house. Young Goldmann, for instance, and his sister Ruth."

"Oh, insufferable!" said Janet; but the words were spoken as a kind of whisper, and did not seem to reach Miss Alice Brandt, who continued her remarks.

"He is great friends now, I am told, with the young Duc de Méricourt who called on us last year when we were in Long Island. I thought him charming, and I know he was greatly smitten with you, my dear."

She tapped her niece playfully on the wrist, but Janet pulled her arm away quickly, and said rather bitterly:

"Smitten with my dollars, Aunt Alice. It was too transparent!"

Miss Alice Brandt laughed.

"Oh, well, a few dollars are useful to old families! But

youth is youth, all the same, and boys and girls must find their mates."

"Not in the money market," said Janet.

"You forget yourself, my dear!" said Miss Alice Brandt, very icily; and, turning away from her niece, she inquired whether England had changed much since the war. She had been told that young men were not so well behaved as before, and that the younger generation had lost some of its courtesy. We pursued that inquiry for a little while, and then conversation languished. It was Miss Janet who revived it.

"How much you laugh at your table! Who is that little lady like a wood sprite! I would like to know her so much."

I mentioned the name Recochewitz, and Miss Alice Brandt looked severe.

"I am told she is not at all respectable."

"I know nothing about her past," I said. "Now, in the present, she is a charming little creature, full of beautiful fancies and merry thoughts like fairy tales."

"Not a good companion for Janet," said Miss Alice Brandt. "I'm not a snob, thank God, but naturally, with our name, we have to draw the line at gipsies."

"I like the gipsy heart," said Janet.

Miss Alice Brandt raised her eyebrows at me, as though to say: "Youth is very dangerous! We shall have to be careful of this girl!" It was a confidence inspired, perhaps, by a touch of grey each side of my forehead. We were two old fogeys who understood the perils of life. So I interpreted her glance, and was reminded of middle age, which, sometimes, I was apt to forget.

Outside, in the garden lounge, after dinner, Miss Alice Brandt, as a further sign of confidence, left us together while she went to fetch a wrap, or perhaps to read one of those French novels which she was careful to keep from her niece. For a time we chatted about music and the theatre season in New York. Then I asked Miss Janet how she looked forward to a year in Europe.

She spoke suddenly with great frankness, overcoming her

shyness, which was visible by the way she twisted her fingers in her lap.

"It will be hateful! I'm being taken over on exhibition. The richest young woman in New York. . . . That house in the Avenue Victor Hugo—I know exactly what it will be like. There will be an incessant stream of American callers, bankers, business men, and American officers, afraid to talk straight to me, or be anything but formal and polite, because I'm a great heiress and beyond their reach. There will be some of the French aristocracy, like the Duc de Méricourt, calling with hothouse flowers, sending their mothers to call on my aunt, smirking and scraping with a conventional gallantry—and all the time I shall miss the reality of life, and all the things that other girls have."

"What are those things?" I asked, amused.

"Freedom, companionship, forgetfulness of money standards, sincerity, and"—she hesitated for a second or more, and then looked at me with a kind of forced courage, and added—"the chance of love."

"Lord!" I said, "no wonder your aunt looks worried if you talk to her like that!"

"I don't." She laughed more merrily than I had heard her yet. "I've always lived in terror of Aunt Alice!"

She told me something of the way in which she had been brought up. A series of timid English governesses who tried to make a snob of her, and hid all the realities of life. They were abject in their worship of wealth. Then a school for young ladies in Massachusetts, presided over by a lady who gave orders to all the junior mistresses that Miss Janet Brandt was to be treated with special care and consideration. That meant that her mistakes were overlooked, her tempers excused, because her name was a good advertisement to the school. It meant that the mistresses toadied to her, and that many of the girls, though not all, made "a goose" of her, in order to be invited to her parties in the Avenue.

"Horrible!" I said. "I wonder you survived it, and kept a sense of humour."

"I haven't!" she confessed rather miserably. "I'm nothing but a negative thing labelled with the dollar sign."

"I think there's something pretty positive about you," I told her with a smile; and I think she took that for a compliment.

She whispered to me, for her aunt was coming down the corridor, "I want to meet people on equal terms. Without the dollar sign labelled all over me. Will you help me? In Paris?"

"I'll have a try," I said, rather cautiously; but she made a pledge of it.

"Promise?"

"Yes; I promise."

It was a pretty foolish thing to promise, as I found out afterwards, when I was "in the basket," as the French would say. And even that night, when I lay in my bunk thinking over the girl's talk, I had a kind of premonition that if I kept that promise it would lead to trouble. There was something unusual about Janet Brandt. Underneath her timidity, which made one's first impression quite false, there was a spirit of adventure. Physically as well as mentally she was behind a mask. She had called herself a plain girl, though Mickleham, who ought to know, having been a great philanderer, had called her once a *belle laide*. But just as through her rather sulky shyness there had appeared an ardent and sensitive quality of mind, so at times when her eyes were bright, a shadow seemed to pass from her face and reveal its beauty. Well, perhaps beauty is too strong a word, but I could understand a man younger than I being fascinated by the gipsy look of this Brandt girl. Gipsy was the word, and she had used it herself. "I like the gipsy heart," she said, when speaking of Sonia Recochewitz. Old man Brandt, who had made all the dollars, had something of a gipsy look, from a portrait I had seen—by Sargent—in that house in Fifth Avenue. A bit of a bandit, too, I should say.

On the fifth day of the voyage home, I received a special invitation to step across the mystic and material barrier dividing the first from the second class. It was from Paul Hirst, who wrote that he had been nominated as chairman of the concert in aid of the seamen's orphanage, and desired

my support in this ordeal, provided that I could tear myself away from the millionaires and mighty people and condescend to endure the society of second class nonentities of less wealth and more intelligence. I damned his impertinence and accepted the invitation.

Certainly the level of entertainment was vastly superior to that which had already been given in the first class, and I agreed with Hirst that his crowd was more interesting than mine, because more youthful and rather at the beginning of life's adventure, than approaching the fag end of the middle period. Still, as I told him, I would not exchange Sonia Recochewitz as a table companion with any of his particular fancies.

He was too nervous to argue with me, and I could see that underneath his apparent easy manner as chairman he was highly strung. Perhaps that accounted for the rather grim wit with which he prefaced some of the "turns," and for some scathing passages, meant, no doubt, to be satirical and humorous, which he put into a speech in aid of the charity for which the concert was given. He had a natural gift of eloquence, heightened by the absolute sincerity of his words and the grace of his delivery.

His theme was the suffering of the world's children as the victims of war. It was they who paid, he said, in their bodies and in their souls, for the cruelties and greed of the old men who had brought civilisation to ruin. He gave some very moving pictures of starving and stricken childhood in Vienna, Poland, and other countries which he had visited as a newspaper reporter, and I saw how his words gripped his audience in that second-class saloon and stirred their emotions. Then he launched into a flaming satire against the Old Ones, as he called them, the great Somebodies of the world, with big stomachs under big waistcoats, and hearts as small as hazel nuts, and brains sharpened by cunning and craft in the pursuit of wealth. They were not neglectful of charity, but made use of it as a camouflage of their profiteering, as a life insurance against the revolt of misery.

"In this ship," said Paul Hirst, "but not in the second class, there are many kings of commerce and lords of

labour. Last night they were asked to give to this charity for the children of those who were drowned in their service, the orphans of the seamen who carry their cargoes and their profits. How much did they subscribe? It worked out at five dollars a head. Not a great tax for men of millions and women whose diamonds would rescue starving cities. Here in the second class, we should do better than that out of our small savings. Let us teach the first-class folk a lesson in charity!"

In some such words, though I don't remember them exactly, Paul Hirst made his appeal, and though when he sat down there was loud applause, I fancy that some of his fellow-passengers looked uncomfortable, and even alarmed, by the tone of his speech, or, at least, that part of it. One of the ship's officers was visibly annoyed, and afterwards spoke to me on the way back to the first class.

"That fellow is a darned Bolshevik! If the first-class passengers get to hear of his attack there'll be trouble for the company."

"There's nothing wrong with the lad except the extravagance of youth," I answered. "He has been hipped by the misery he has seen about the world."

The ship's officer gave a short, gruff laugh.

"Misery! He can't tell me anything about that. But I know how to keep my tongue behind my teeth, especially in a ship like this."

No report of Hirst's speech came across to the first class, and there was no trouble as a result of it. The only person to whom I mentioned it was Miss Janet Brandt, who asked me how I had enjoyed the concert.

"The concert was wonderful," I told her, "and there was a speech by a young friend of mine which nearly broke up the whole show. Good thing the captain wasn't there."

Then I described Paul Hirst to her, and gave the outline of his remarks.

The girl seemed strangely moved, almost distressed.

"I think he's right," she said. "When I read about all the agony of the world this kind of thing seems to burn my neck."

She caught hold of a rope of pearls about her neck, and gave them a little tug.

"They're beautiful," I said, touching them.

"I hate the sight of them," she answered.

Afterwards she told me she would like to meet Paul Hirst.

"That's easy," I told her, without a thought of Hirst's peculiar character. "The boy lives with his sister in Paris. I can bring you together one day."

"I hope you will," said Janet Brandt. "As part of your promise."

"What promise?"

She was vexed because I had forgotten the promise to show her "life" in Paris; life more living than that in picture galleries and museums, and youth whom she could meet without being "labelled with the dollar sign."

"I can see myself getting into trouble with Aunt Alice," I said chaffingly; and that seemed to amuse her, for she gave a queer little laugh and looked at me with what I called her gipsy face.

"Aunt Alice needn't know. After all, I have a right to my own adventures."

"Certainly," I agreed; "I'm all for liberty."

That was the last word but one I had with the girl before she and her aunt went off the ship at Cherbourg. The last word was when Miss Alice Brandt allowed me to shake hands with her, or rather, to take her cold, white hand in mine for a moment, and when Janet touched me on the arm and whispered as she passed. The word was "Remember!"—King Charles's last word on the scaffold.

Hirst went off at Cherbourg with some other passengers from the second class, and I was able to exchange a few words with him as he stood on the tender, looking up to the castle heights of the ship he had just left.

"Give my love to Pat!" I shouted.

He could not see me among the faces leaning over the side of the lower deck through a wet darkness shot by bewildering lights. He recognised my voice, and shouted an answer.

"See you in Paris soon!"

It was, however, more than two months later that I went to Paris from London, and some weeks after that before I had an opportunity of seeing Paul Hirst and his mad-cap sister—the adorable Pat.

It was Pat who opened the door of the *appartement* on the fifth floor of a dirty old house at the bad end of the Rue de la Pompe. Though it was six in the afternoon, she was in her dressing-gown—once of elegant pink silk, but now less elegant because of ink stains and a tattered lining. Her orange-coloured hair was loose over her shoulders, and her feet were bare except for one carpet slipper. The other lay abandoned up the passage.

She was not at all abashed to see me standing there, but much surprised.

"An ancient ghost!" she cried. "I thought it was Paul back from his hopeless quest."

"What quest?" I asked, following her into the passage.

"Work. He lost his job after the American trip, and now is a free-lance again. You know what that means. Rigid economy and only occasional orgies to maintain a sense of humour."

"Don't you put on any clothes?" I asked her, looking at her little white foot on the cold oilcloth.

"Oh, I'm quite decent," she answered; "don't let your sense of propriety suffer any unnecessary shock. I've been mending an evening frock, into which I shall presently jump, if you'll keep an eye on the kettle in the back kitchen. I dine to-night with a Russian prince. He has saved up ten francs for a banquet in my honour."

"Is he the latest?" I asked. "What has happened to the young French lieutenant who was sick with passion for you last time I was here?"

"Oh, François? He's still sick!"

"You're a ruthless woman!" I told her. "*La Belle Dame sans Merci.*"

"I give a lot of fun to my friends," she answered calmly. "And so many of them love me that I hate to hurt any of them by showing preference to one."

"My dear kid," I said, in a fatherly way, "it's time you settled down as a wife and a mother."

"Not on your life," said Miss Pat. "Give me liberty or give me death. Because, I have to mend Paul's shirts and see that he keeps his nails clean and his soul bright. God has laid that duty upon me——"

"And do you mind going into that cupboard and casting your blear eye on the kettle while I slip into my frock? My Russian prince hasn't known me long enough to enjoy the privilege of my dressing-gown."

"He'll tame you all right if he's fool enough to marry you," I told her. "All Russians are Tsars under their skins."

"I want to be tamed," said Pat; "but 'oh! the difference to me!' as the poet sings."

She whisked off to her bedroom, where she sang the latest *chansons* of the boulevards in a clear, high voice, while I burnt my fingers with a kettle on an oil-stove, and made some tea which had been put ready on a side-table. Then there was a ring at the bell, and I let in Paul, who did not seem in the least surprised to see me, and without formal greeting growled that he had forgotten the cursed latch-key again.

He was in a savage temper with life generally. His work in America had not pleased his editor, and he had been flung off the paper, which he had served for two years or more. Now he was writing short stories, which no one would buy. "They're too good," he told me, with the calm arrogance of youth. "I write about the truth of things, and, of course, that's the most unmarketable commodity."

He was shabbier than usual, and rather thinned down, I thought. Probably he was going without proper food, so that Pat might get her share of fun. I had known him do that before, in the old days, though he kept it a dark secret from Pat, who would have starved to death rather than let him go hungry for her sake.

"Pat looks fine," I said. "More beautiful than before, and just as merry as ever."

"Oh, she's all right," he said casually. "Only about fifteen

poor swine hanging round her for any pearl of wit she likes to throw at them. I marvel at their patience and long-suffering."

"One day," I warned him, "she'll fall head over heels in love, instead of playing Beatrice to every Benedick."

"Don't you worry," said Paul. "She knows how to take care of herself, and I keep a sharp eye on the hussy."

"Oh, you do, do you?" exclaimed Pat herself, who overheard the last remark, and now appeared in her evening frock of black silk, cut low at the neck and short at the skirt, as the fashion then was, though frocks have grown long in Paris now.

She rumbled her brother's hair, pulled his tie tighter, and kissed him on the forehead.

"The simple youth thinks his wicked sister can't escape his jealous eye. He thinks she hasn't escaped a thousand times to most dangerous adventures of which he knoweth nothing."

"I can't prevent you playing the giddy goat, that's certain," growled Paul; but I knew this brother and sister well enough to be sure of their devotion to each other.

The Russian prince came; a pale-faced, whimsical fellow, who spoke French perfectly and English hardly at all. He was a clerk in some Paris warehouse, and horribly poor, but not at all unhappy, as he confessed, because poverty in Paris seemed to him more amusing than his old days of luxury in St. Petersburg before the war, and enormously more amusing than the stench and filth of trenches of the Russian front, followed by the terrors of Bolshevism.

"Where shall we dine?" he asked Pat. "I have no less than twenty-five francs for this evening's frolic."

"Twenty-five!" cried Pat in French, without a trace of English accent. "Why, we shall be able to have wine with a label on it!"

They went off together like children to a school treat; and Paul dined with me separately, near the Luxembourg Gardens. After we had discussed the state of Europe, the cost of living in Paris, and the chance of revolution in England—Paul taking the gloomiest view of everything—I put

into words a thought that I had had at the back of my mind.

"There's a girl I know in Paris who's rather lonely. May I bring her along to see Pat one day?"

"Why not?" said Paul. "Pat knows a whole bunch of girls who play a lone hand. Some of 'em feed with us at Suzanne's; you know, the cheap eating-house in the Rue de la Victoire. Bring her along one night. It's a rowdy crowd, but good fun, and liberty of speech."

"Splendid!"

It was of Janet Brandt that I was thinking, and of the promise I had made her more than two months before, on the *Aquitania*. I had only had one glimpse of her since I had been in Paris, and that was in the Bois, where she was driving with Miss Alice Brandt in an expensive looking limousine. They stopped where the avenue goes up to the lake, and greeted a young man, obviously French by the cut of his clothes and the vivacity of his manner, who was strolling along the sidewalk with two Russian wolf-hounds. He stepped into the road with bared head, as though in the presence of royalty, and when Miss Janet held out her hand through the window he put it to his lips. She laughed a little at that gesture, and withdrew her hand hurriedly, as it seemed to me. Miss Alice Brandt sat up very stiff and straight, and looked like a French *grande dame*. As for Janet, of whom I had only a fleeting glance, it seemed to me that she was rather pale, and not much amused with herself, as the French would say. That impression was confirmed when I called the next day in the Avenue Victor Hugo, where they were handsomely installed with English servants and a French chef, and Louis XVI furniture and decorations.

"You are magnificent here," I said to Miss Alice Brandt. "It's marvellous how quickly you have arranged everything."

"We miss the home comforts," she said, as though living in a makeshift place. "But it's not bad, and I dare say we can put up with it for the season. The dear Ambassador has been very kind."

"And you?" I asked Janet. "You like Paris?"

"I have been in the picture galleries and museums," she said with an elusive smile, in which I fancied a reproach.

"And you have plenty of company?"

"Quite a traffic of old friends," said Miss Alice Brandt. "The Coppins, of Greenwich, the Arkwrights, of Albany, Mr. Henry J. Budd, Mary Schwarz and her little niece, General Hooper—any number of New Yorkers. We have also met some charming French families, the old *noblesse*."

"Among them the Duc de Méricourt, I presume? I see he is in Paris."

Miss Alice looked at Janet in a furtive way, and then turned to me again.

"A most delightful young man and most attentive! His mother and I have become quite confidential. She is the sweetest old creature."

"She frightens me," said Janet. "I can't bear the way she stares at me through her lorgnettes, nor the patronising way in which she taps my hand and calls me *charmante mademoiselle*!"

Some of the "traffic" came into the drawing-room for tea. Among them the Arkwrights, of Albany, General Hooper, and several British and American officers and their wives. A kindly good-natured crowd, but perhaps a shade too formal in their manners both to Miss Alice Brandt and to Janet, who seemed uninterested in their company.

I had some minutes of private talk with the girl, and she confessed her boredom.

"Aunt Alice forgets I'm only twenty! All these people are very kind, but they are——"

I helped her out with an unfinished sentence.

"Middle-aged and frumpy, eh?"

"I'm becoming a frump myself!" she declared, with a sigh that came up from her shoes.

"What about Paris? Don't you find it good fun?"

"Paris is wonderful," said Janet, "but I only see it as though I sat in the stalls of a theatre. I want to get into its life a little. Into some of the rooms behind the windows in back streets."

"Been to any French restaurants?" I asked.

She laughed and said, "The Ritz and the Continentals. The people there were all from the Ritz-Carlton and the Vanderbilt."

It was then I asked her if she would like to come to a queer little place one night where she would get to know some of the real life of Paris—students, writers, working-girls, a cosmopolitan crowd of impecunious youth.

Her eyes lit up at the idea of it, and when I asked, "What about your aunt?" she seemed to think that there would be no trouble if I asked Miss Brandt's permission on her behalf.

"She thinks the world of you."

"It's my grey hairs," I said; "they give austere aunts a sense of security, alas!"

Miss Janet was not wrong in her idea. When I asked Miss Brandt whether I could conduct her niece to a museum, and take her to a little dinner later, she was delighted; and was pleased to say that she would trust Janet to my care and discretion with the utmost confidence.

I am bound to confess, however, that my conscience troubled me with unusual prickings when after a brief visit to the Carnavalet Museum, in which I tried to remember all that I had forgotten about the French Revolution, I took the girl in the Metro—for the first time in her life she travelled underground and did a little strap-hanging, which seemed to amuse her vastly—and conducted her to the Restaurant Julie, in a little street off the Boulevard Montparnasse. I could not understand this mental trouble of mine, because the little eating-house was perfectly respectable, as was the company we were likely to find there; but my mind became weighted with the idea of the Brandt dollars.

"If this girl dies from ptomaine poisoning out of a tin of sardines," I thought, "the United States will demand my body for the torturers."

Janet looked as though she were out for tremendous adventure, but before we went through the swing doors,

with their pink curtains, she put her hand on my arm and gave me a kind of royal command.

"Don't introduce me to any one as Janet Brandt. Let me be Janet Gordon for once. It's my mother's name, and doesn't scare people with such a noise of dollars."

"Just as you like," I said; and it was as Janet Gordon that I presented to her Pat Hirst and Paul, who were already seated at one of the little tables, which, presently, as the door swung to and fro, became crowded with a queer collection of young men and women, most of whom seemed to know each other.

Pat Hirst was in one of her riotous moods, and her behaviour would have been scandalous if the company had been easily scandalised, which undoubtedly they were not. Making a place for Janet by her side, without ceremony, she took up her knife and fork, banged their handles on the table, and shouted out, "*A boire!*"—signifying a desire for drink—to a French waiter with the face of a gargoyle of Notre Dame, illuminated by a sense of humour. Her next performance was to break a piece of bread from her roll and throw it with unerring aim at a one-armed young man—French by the look of him—at the other side of the room, who turned the other cheek when it struck him, and replied very skilfully with a rose from a glass on his table. The petals scattered over Pat's red hair, and the effect of this retort courteous was received with applause by the company.

"*C'est chevaleresque, ça!*" said a girl, who was obviously Russian—an unmistakable type to me—and a young lady of distinction, I guessed, in spite of a cheap frock, judging from the way several young men, Russian like herself, bowed to her when they came in, and kissed her hand before taking their seats at other tables.

Paul introduced me.

"Princess Maniloff. You've met her brother."

I guessed that it was the brother who had taken Pat to a banquet with twenty-five francs; and guessed rightly, for he came in later, and bowed very low to Miss Pat before making a grimace of comical despair because there was no

room at her table. Pat was not at all in a sympathetic mood with him, nor in a conversational mood with any one. She was in a singing mood, and gave voice to some *poilus'* songs to which, in the evil and heroic years, the French troops had gone marching up the roads. The one-armed young Frenchman, who had been hit by her bit of bread, took up the chorus of them, beating time with his soup spoon; and some of the other girls joined in, laughing between the verses at Pat, who had made her table napkin into a *poilu's* cap and put it jauntily on one side of her carrotty hair, looking as pretty as any Miss Impudence I have seen.

Paul frowned at her, and growled a rebuke.

"This isn't the *Folies Bergères*. I can't hear to eat my soup. Can't you be serious for once?"

"*Jamais de la vie!*" said Pat, raising a glass of the vilest *vin ordinaire* and reciting a verse of Ronsard's in praise of the grape. She seemed the most popular person. From many of the other tables young men of diverse nationalities raised their glasses and kissed them to her in salutation, and I noticed how, now and then, girls came to her table to whisper a few words, to touch her hand, to give a little tug at her red hair.

I watched Janet—Janet Gordon, as I had called her—in this queer company—amazingly queer it must have been to her. She sat very still and silent opposite Paul Hirst, who had not yet spoken a single word to her, glancing at the people about her, taking in all the scene, with a curious smile of interest and enjoyment; and occasionally, I thought, as her eyes rested on Pat, with admiration and amazement. Once she burst into a low-toned laugh as Pat held the waiter's hand, the gargoyle-faced old fellow, and coaxed him to bring her another portion of *asperges*. I noticed that Janet wore a plain black dress, without a single jewel about her, as though she were afraid of being detected as a rich young woman; and I noticed also that Paul, though he was as silent as herself, studied her now and then when she was not aware of his gaze. Presently he spoke to her:

"Been in Paris long?"

Janet was startled by his sudden advance towards conversational exercise, and flushed rather vividly with her usual shyness, but answered readily:

"About two months. I'm American."

"So I guessed," said Paul. "I was over there two months ago. What boat did you cross in?"

She told him, and he seemed surprised.

"So was I. I don't remember you at all."

He took it for granted that she had been a second-class passenger, and I was amused when she did not deceive him.

"Your speech was very interesting," she said.

"Think so?" said Paul doubtfully. "I loathe speaking. Always say the wrong things."

"You said the right things then."

I did not hear any more of this conversation because I found myself engaged in an argument with Princess Maniloff on Russian literature, in which I was hopelessly routed. By this time her brother had found a corner at our table next to Pat, with whom he flirted in a whimsical way. I heard her offer to mend his shirts as a reward for the banquet he had given her. This offer inspired by the frayed condition of his cuffs, touched him almost to tears, and he vowed that no such charity had been known on earth since some Russian saint, whose name I have forgotten.

It was ten o'clock when I turned to Janet and reminded her that it was time to go.

"Why such hurry?" asked Paul in his grumpiest tone; "Miss Gordon and I seem to agree about most things, and it's a pity to break the unusual spell."

"Another half-hour!" cried Janet, like a pleading child.

"Remember your aunt," I said.

"Oh, aunts mustn't be humoured," said Pat, intervening. "My young life was nearly wrecked by an aunt. We're to have some music presently at Yvonne's flat."

"Who's Yvonne?" I asked.

She pointed to a handsome, white-faced girl who was putting one of the little French rolls into her handbag.

"That girl like a saint in a Burne-Jones window. She plays divinely, and doesn't get enough to eat."

Janet Brandt looked distressed.

"Is that why she is saving her bread?"

"Oh, lots of us do that," said Pat, "when funds are low. One doesn't waste good food if one belongs to a really good society like this. The Intellectuals, don't you know?"

Janet looked at me with an inquiring glance, as though to ask, "Is that true or a joke?"

"*La vie de Bohème*," I said. "They make a game of poverty."

After that we said good-bye, but not before Paul had growled out a sheepish invitation to Janet.

"There's always a cup of tea going in the Rue de la Pompe. Any old time you feel like it. We might continue our discussion one day. Pat's always pleased to have callers—aren't you, Pat?"

Pat pulled her brother's ear.

"*You're* not, sulky one. You hate 'em like poison."

Then she turned to Janet with a smile that was irresistible. "If Paul invites you, I'm your handmaiden. I'd love you to come, Janet Gordon."

On the way back to the Avenue Victor Hugo, Janet held my arm tight in hers and repeated again and again that she had enjoyed every minute of the evening.

"It was all wonderful," she said. "Like a fairy tale. How splendid to be like that. I loved what you said, 'They make a game of poverty.'"

"It's the only way," I told her. "Otherwise poverty is hell."

She pulled something out of her pocket and said, "I've taken this as a souvenir," and showed me, to my amazement, a *petit pain*, like the roll which the girl Yvonne had slipped into her bag. Then she said one of those queer things which startled me.

"I'd like to need it one day. I agree with your friend that no one knows life who doesn't know hunger."

"What friend is that?" I asked; and she said:

"Paul, who is like the Apostle."

"If the old Paul was as grumpy in his youth as this one," I remarked, but before I could finish my sentence the footman had opened the wrought-iron door in the Avenue Victor Hugo, and I had to say good-night. The girl pressed my hand, and I felt that her own was hot, as though there were a fever in her, when she thanked me "a thousand times" for the pleasure I had given her.

The next time I saw her was a month later—I had been to Austria to study a bankrupt state—at a reception given by Miss Alice Brandt, which was quite a brilliant affair, as I saw when I drove up in a Paris taxi and found myself in a stream of many handsome automobiles. The American colony was attending in great strength, and there was also a number of distinguished people in French society, including the Duchesse de Chateaubriand, the Marquis de Polignac, the Baron de Rêzé, the Duc de Méricourt, and M. Jules Cambon. The British Ambassador and his lady and several members of the Embassy were early arrivals. Miss Alice Brandt received her guests, and the Brandt diamonds glittered in her hair and about her neck and wrists, so that she looked very imposing. Janet stood by her aunt's side in a white frock, which I suppose was a French model of extreme cost, though I know nothing of these things and only admired her simplicity. Something had happened to change her appearance. She was thin, I thought, and rather worn, like a girl at the end of a harassing season; but there was a new brightness in her eyes, and her whole manner was more vivacious and assured. She was no longer the timid, shrinking girl I had first met in Fifth Avenue.

I could have no talk with her beyond a greeting, for many guests crowded round her, and afterwards the Duc de Méricourt, with what seemed to me a definite claim to her company, strolled away with her into a quiet alcove.

It was quite late in the evening, when some of the guests had gone, that Miss Alice Brandt drew me on one side and said, "I'm worried about Janet."

"In what way?" I asked.

"I can hardly say," replied Miss Brandt. "The girl is a

mystery to me. She has lost her appetite—doesn't eat enough to feed a bird—and she slips away in the afternoons, and sometimes in the evenings, without letting me know anything of her whereabouts. Sometimes I think all kinds of dreadful things. But I'm sure she is a good girl, and she only laughs at me when I ask for her confidence."

"She seems very merry and bright," I said, looking over to the alcove where she stood laughing with the Duc de Méricourt.

"That worries me most of all," said Miss Brandt. "She comes back from some of her mysterious expeditions—exploring Paris, she calls them—with her eyes strangely alight and her cheeks flushed, and a strange, unnatural gaiety. But at dinner she refuses all her food, and just picks and pecks at it."

"She seems attracted by the Duc de Méricourt," I said, glancing over to the little group in the alcove again.

Miss Alice Brandt took me by the wrist and drew me closer.

"My dear," she said, "the young man has set his heart on her, but she treats him as a figure of fun. He is most patient and persistent."

I confess that I wondered whether love of the Brandt dollars were the cause of the young man's patience; but I did not reveal this thought to Miss Brandt.

It was Viscount Mickleham who gave me a clue to some of Janet's private adventures during the past months. That young man turned up preposterously late, shook hands with Miss Brandt, bowed in his elegant, smiling way to Janet, who blushed exceedingly at the sight of him, and prepared to walk downstairs again and so out to some more amusing company, when he caught sight of me.

"So you're back again, you old panderer!" he exclaimed. I tucked my arm through his, and asked what the deuce he meant by calling me names like that.

"What about Janet Gordon and her double life?" he asked. "You will get into trouble about that little plot!"

"Plot be hanged!" I said. "And, anyhow, what do you know about Janet Gordon?"

"I called on the adorable Pat, and found her at tea with a young person, whom she introduced as Janet Gordon—as poorly dressed as a *couturière* in a poor way of business. I recognised her instantly as Janet Brandt, and wondered what the game was. She went as white as my shirt-front when she saw me."

"Did you give her away?" I asked him; but he shook his head and said, "I try to play the game like a little gentleman. If a girl calls herself any old thing I regard it as her affair, and not mine."

I was astonished that he knew Pat Hirst, and told him so, to his great amusement.

"My dear lad," he said, "I've been in love with her for three years. I went to the United States to forget her impudence, and came back again to warm my soul at her red hair."

"Why don't you marry the child?" I asked him frankly, as an old comrade; and he answered by saying, "Why doesn't the child marry me? Because she's not such a blooming fool. A penniless peer, with no visible means of subsistence without the help of money-lenders, is no catch for a girl who earns her living and gets a lot of fun out of the game."

He walked up towards the Etoile, while I burrowed into the Metro, and made my way to the Rue de la Pompe.

Pat was alone, reading a French novel, smoking a *petit caporal* and stewing some coffee on the oil stove.

"What's all this about Janet Gordon?" I asked, and staring at me blankly she replied:

"What's all what?"

"How many times has she been here since I left?"

"Pretty often," said Pat. "Any objection? Paul is madly in love with her. They talk idealism, socialism, and all that kind of pap until I get tired. I'm afraid I'll lose little brother Paul. He's badly hit this time."

"Good God!" I said, in a sudden panic, thinking of Miss Alice Brandt and all the Brandts on Fifth Avenue and Wall Street.

"You seem worried," said Pat. "Ladle out that coffee and

pull your nerves together. Paul has gone for a long tramp to dream of his lady. Presently he'll be home and write a sonnet."

"Look here," I said, "do you know who that girl is?"

"No scandals," said Pat reprovingly. "In our sphere of life we live and let live. There's nothing wrong with Janet except poverty, and an ill-tempered aunt who wants to keep her caged."

"Poverty!" I exclaimed.

"That's no crime," said Pat. "I hate to think of that child not getting enough to eat. She's ravenous when we invite her to pot-luck and won't waste the smallest crumb of bread."

I was too astounded to make any comment on those remarks.

Pat went on to tell me that Janet Gordon was a student of music in Paris, who led an unhappy life with the querulous aunt, and could not afford to buy herself any little trinkets or frocks.

"She always wears the same old black slip, and was frightfully excited the other day when I gave her a little brooch worth about three francs."

"Pat," I said, "you're a creature without nerves, so you won't get excited when I give Janet Gordon away. Her real name is Janet Brandt."

"That doesn't interest me in the least," said Pat. "What's in a name?"

"A deuce of a lot," I said, annoyed that my revelation had been without effect. "In this particular case there are God knows how many million dollars in that name. Haven't you heard of the Brandts, of New York—the Brandt millions? Well, Janet is the heiress who will get most of them when she becomes twenty-one."

Pat laughed loud and long, and then asked me not to pull her leg so late at night. Nothing would induce her to believe that I was talking in sober earnest, and she passed the joke on to Paul when he let himself in with his latch-key.

Paul smiled grimly.

"Janet's one of us," he said. "She knows the game of

poverty all right. Down to its bare bones, and, like me, she hates the rich world, with its infernal inequalities."

"Doing anything to-morrow night?" I asked.

He told me that he had nothing particular to do, and didn't object to dining with me.

We dined at the Griffon, which he thought was a tourists' trap, and then strolled with me through the Champs Elysées towards the Avenue Victor Hugo. On the way he told me that he had a rather decent job in view, and if it came off he might change his state in life.

"In what way?" I asked.

"The matrimonial way," he said, rather sheepishly, and hastened to explain that Pat would never marry so long as he was a bachelor. She considered it her sacred duty to look after him. That was very rough on her; and, anyhow, unless he married now he never would.

"A nice girl?" I inquired; and he said, in a mystic way:

"The soul I've been searching for—Janet Gordon."

"Look here," I said sharply, stopping under the trees of the Champs Elysées, "what I told Pat was true. Janet Gordon is Janet Brandt—heiress to millions—too rich for you, Paul; out of your world."

Something in my voice frightened him. Yet he would not believe me. He would not believe me until something happened outside the house in the Avenue Victor Hugo.

It was after dinner, and Miss Brandt was going to the opera with her niece and young De Méricourt, as I knew from what they had told me the night before. Their car was waiting for them, and I spoke to the driver:

"Is Miss Brandt starting now?"

"In half a minute, I guess," he answered.

Paul and I stood beyond the light of the street lamp, and I said "Wait!" He was perfectly silent, and I saw that his face had gone white and that he had a sullen look. In less than half a minute a footman came out with some rugs, which he put into the car. Then two ladies and a young man came through the wrought-iron door and stood for a moment while one of the ladies—Janet—drew on her long white gloves.

"It is a charming evening," said the Duc de Méricourt.

"Too good to go to the opera," said Janet.

She stood full in the lamp light, which shimmered on her rose-coloured opera frock. She was wearing a little diamond crown, like a princess.

"We can talk between the acts," said De Méricourt.

"Music is the best inspiration of pleasant thought."

Paul made a sudden step forward, and I put my hand on his arm and said, "Steady, old man!" His movements made Janet turn her head as she was about to follow Miss Brandt into the car. I am sure she saw Paul. I think their eyes met and spoke to each other. Janet seemed to smile at him in a pleading way; though perhaps that was only my fancy, for a moment later she disappeared into the darkness of the car. Young De Méricourt followed, and they drove away.

"Well, Paul," I said, "seeing is believing."

He swore a violent oath, and said something under his breath about having been fooled or tricked, I forget which.

"She was playing the game of poverty," I said, "as a new experience. A foolish thing to do."

He shook my hand off his arm roughly, and told me it was all my damned fault; and before I could argue the matter, turned on his heel and strode off at a quick pace down the Avenue. The poor lad was hard hit. Janet's gipsy look and some lure in the girl had caught him out, and he knew now, as I had told him, that she was out of his world, unattainable, because of a mountain of dollars between them.

Three weeks in Berlin interrupted my knowledge of this little drama in Paris, and I had to pick up the threads again when I came back. It was red-headed Pat who mended the broken threads in my knowledge and gave me something of a panic.

I met her in the little restaurant where Janet had had her first glimpse behind the scenes of life in Paris. She was dining with Mickleham and several others, but saw me at once when I stood on the inside of the door with pink curtains, and made a funny face at me, as though I were in for a hot time. Mickleham waved his hand cheerily.

"Now what's the matter?" I thought, with a guilty conscience.

The matter was quite serious, as I found out later in the evening. Owing to the crowd at Pat's table, where for once she was behaving quite nicely, except for occasional frivolities with the gargoyle-faced waiter, I took a vacant seat at a table, where I found two other friends, no other than little Sonia Recochewitz, the Russian dancer, whom I had met on the *Aquitania*, and O'Calloran, the young Sinn Feiner, who told me that he had escaped from an English prison after a brief spell of war in County Cork. Sonia was dancing in Paris, and had not lost her whimsical blend of childish humour and sad knowledge, nor her trick of converting a table napkin into comic animals. I think a love affair was in progress between her and O'Calloran, judging by the way she fondled his hand with her little white fingers. However, that was none of my business, and when they went away together at nine o'clock, because Sonia was dancing at half-past—she had eaten nothing, I noticed, while O'Calloran dined—I was glad to see Pat jump up from her table and come across the room to me, where I now sat alone.

"A cup of coffee," she commanded; "and silence for a tragic tale!"

"What's the tragedy?" I asked. "Where's Paul?"

She sat down, with her elbows on the table and her chin tucked into the palms of her hands, and an elfin look on her pretty face.

"You're a beauty!" she said, with the deepest sarcasm.

"So I've been told before," I answered very calmly. "But what's the matter with that?"

"I suppose you're amused with yourself?" she went on. "You introduce a dollar princess in disguise to poor but honest folk, and then breeze away, careless of having stirred up a witch's cauldron of trouble and wrecked a number of innocent and happy lives. You're a monster, that's what you are!"

"I'm a man of peace and goodwill," I told her. "But what's happened? What have you done with Paul?"

She lit a cigarette and looked at me with mock tragedy, in which I now know there was a little reality.

"I'll tell you one thing that's happened. Paul has abandoned the sister who loved him for better or worse, in sickness and in health, in fat times and lean; who mended his shirts and his socks; who suffered his bad tempers, and nursed his sense of humour; and rejected the honourable love of innumerable young men, so that she might devote herself body and soul to his temperamental needs. Now he has fled and forsaken her, leaving her lorn and lone."

"Fled! Where?" I asked, rather anxiously. "Fled how?"

"Paul has gone and got married," said Pat.

She gave a hysterical little laugh, but began mopping tears from her eyes.

"I feel the loneliest thing in Paris," she said, with a sort of sob in her voice, though she laughed again at comedy mixed with tragedy. "I'll have to marry some one in self-defence."

"Look here," I said, rather terror-stricken, "tell me straight what's happened. Who has Paul been marrying?"

"Well, he's only done it once," she said; "but it's enough. He and Janet went off in a taxi-cab, and from the postmark on a picture post card they seem to be at Avignon. 'Having a good time,' wrote Paul. That's the sort of thing he would write!"

I confess that in my cowardice the face of one lady haunted me—Miss Alice Brandt. Of course, she would make me responsible for the whole business. There would be the very devil of a row.

I spoke bitterly.

"I thought Paul was a sentimental Socialist. How does he square that with marrying one of the richest girls in the United States? Rather inconsistent of little brother, isn't it?"

"That's where you're wrong," said Pat, mopping her eyes with the corner of the tablecloth. "Janet has chucked the dollars."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked. "Nobody can

'chuck' a mountain of money. There it is, and there it stays, increasing at compound interest."

"Janet has chucked 'em all right," said Pat. "Says she prefers the game of poverty. . . . 'And wait till you know the squalor of it, my child,' was what I told her with some passion, which left her cold, with the smile of a mediæval saint. That's how she caught Paul. He would have nothing to do with her as a rich young woman. Told her brutally that not even love would make him endure the curse of wealth. 'I come to you in poverty,' she said, 'without a dollar in my purse!' And sentiment became so sticky that I went into the bedroom with a sense of sea-sickness. Next day Paul kissed me on the forehead like a knight going forth to battle, and said, 'I'll be away for a week or two, old girl. Don't fret, and thanks for being the best sister in the world.' Oh, it was highly amusing, I can assure you."

Highly amusing, though poor Pat wiped her eye again behind a table napkin.

She regained her gaiety when Mickleham came over to our table and said, "You two seem to be telling secrets. Can't I share them?"

"I'll share my last crust with you, Billy," said Pat, "if you'll help me to forget man's ingratitude."

"Meaning Paul, or meaning me?" asked Mickleham; and he looked at Pat in a jolly comradely way, and added in a quiet voice, "I accept the offer of that last crust."

I left them to go to the Avenue Victor Hugo. I had to face this thing out, and the sooner the better. I was right in thinking that Miss Brandt would hold me responsible for what had happened. She did. Referring to the trust she had placed in me, she accused me of dishonour, ungentlemanly behaviour, criminal indiscretion, and other moral delinquencies to which I would not plead guilty.

"You introduced Janet to disreputable young people," she said, "and deliberately thrust her into the fires of temptation. I have no doubt that it was your own political views which have made the poor child utterly insane."

"What have my political views to do with the case, Miss Brandt?" I asked, rather savagely.

"I always suspected you of being an anarchist," she answered in her iciest way. "Doubtless it is upon your suggestion that Janet repudiates her inheritance and refuses to touch a single dollar of what I hold in trust for her."

"She will revise her opinion when the shoe begins to pinch," I said; "but in the meanwhile I shall be much obliged if you will withdraw charges against me which I resent because of their utter absurdity."

"I beg you to leave my house," said Miss Brandt, "and to understand that our friendship is completely at an end."

Upon leaving her house for the last time, I met the young Duc de Méricourt. He had the look of a man who had gambled for big stakes and lost.

It is only from the American papers that I have any further knowledge of Miss Alice Brandt, and I am bound to say that she has dealt with a difficult situation rather gallantly. In an interview with a New York reporter at Monte Carlo she denied the story told with great wealth of dramatic detail that, "Richest Girl in World Weds Paris Apache. Gives Brandt Millions to Bolshevik Funds for Overthrow Civilisation." So far from this being true, stated Miss Brandt, her niece had married, with the full consent of her family, a young English author of remarkable genius, related to the oldest aristocracy in Great Britain—almost of Royal blood, it appeared—and the heir to considerable property in the North of England. His sister was engaged to Viscount Mickleham, of Mickleham Park, Norfolk, well known for a time in American society as junior secretary of the British Embassy in Washington.

It was the last item of news which took me to Pat's apartment in the Rue de la Pompe. I wondered whether it was as true, or as untrue, as the family history of Paul Hirst. After three rings at the bell I perceived a bit of paper pinned to the door above the letter-box. It was in Pat's scrawly handwriting:

"Address: Viscountess Mickleham (strange as it may appear), Mickleham Hall, Norfolk. Back in Paris when

fed up with English respectability. Love to all who love me."

A note from Janet Hirst, just received at my hotel, tells me that she and Paul are still playing the game of poverty, in an apartment at Passy. From a postscript I guess that it is rather a strain.

"Funds are low just now," she wrote, "as Paul is unlucky with his work. We are wonderfully happy, but poverty needs a lot of courage."

XII: A MISSION IN THE RUHR

IT is bad enough to be wrecked on a desert island with only Man Friday for human companionship. It is even less amusing, no doubt, to be a French lieutenant of *mitrailleuses*—that is to say, in charge of a machine-gun section—guarding a desolate part of the railway line between Düsseldorf and Essen.

Lieutenant Delavigne of the French Army in the Ruhr could find no amusement of any kind in the signal-box from which for six months, day after day, he had stared out at the grass growing higher between the rails and sprouting in deserted wagons, and rusty engines motionless in the sidings of what had once been the most intricate and efficient network of railroad lines in Europe.

For the thousandth time Lieutenant Delavigne uttered his complaint of boredom and despair: "*Quelle vie!*" "What a life!"

For the thousandth time the sergeant—his Man Friday—boxed up with him in this informal signal station, granted his agreement.

"Name of a dog, yes! It is not amusing, *mon Lieutenant!*"

It is never amusing to be one of a small body of men in a hostile country where one cannot walk down a street without getting black looks from every passer-by, or to go into a shop without so much as a civil word from the girl behind the counter, to say nothing of having a sentry shot at night in the back of the head by some German civilian skulking in the darkness. That had happened at this guard post. It might happen again any night.

It had been rather good fun at first to show the Boches that France meant business, and would stand no more nonsense about German reparations and unfulfilled pledges. To a young Frenchman who had seen the best part of Northern France laid waste, and had heard a thousand stories of

German arrogance and brutality to French people behind the lines—he had relatives in Lille who were not likely to forget these things—it was not a cause for compassion when German railwaymen, refusing to work under French orders, were turned out neck and crop with their families, when German industrialists, bankers, mayors, and other officials were imprisoned for encouraging riots and resistance, when enormous bundles of paper money were seized and carried off in French lorries as part payment of French debts—though the stuff was hardly worth the trouble—and when threatening crowds of German miners were given a dose of machine gun fire to teach them manners. The Boches were getting a taste of their own medicine. All the same, it was very boring after six months.

Lieutenant Delavigne was starving for a little human society, for a little human love, to be frank. What wonder, when a young Frenchman of twenty-five, extremely beautiful, as his glass told him, and very companionable with the fair sex, whom he adored, found himself shut up in a signal-box with no other recreation than a few evenings in Essen, where even the prettiest girls—and he had to admit that some of them were seductive in their blonde German way—gave him at most one hostile, hateful glance, as though he were as ugly as a Senegalese!

Sometimes he confessed his craving for a little amorous dalliance to Sergeant Michel, and that fellow from the Montmartre district of Paris, where once he had driven a taxicab, responded with the sympathy of a fellow victim condemned to a hermit-like existence.

“Life without women, *mon Lieutenant*, is like bread without wine. Now, if my little Marthe were in this signal-box it would make a lot of difference. The view outside wouldn’t matter two *sous*. I think I have told you about that girl Marthe, with her black eyes and her sharp tongue, *mon Lieutenant?*”

Yes, he had told about Marthe, and Yvonne, and Suzanne, and lots of others. He had told more than he ought to have done, in his frightful dialect of the Paris slums, but these

love stories had helped to pass the time in the abominable signal-box.

It was annoying to this man that the German women would not give him a civil word. He took his revenge on them by calling them "fat cows," and other unpleasant names. And yet, in candid moments, he admitted that they made good wives and mothers.

"France could do with women like that," he remarked. "Not afraid of having big families, and all their children as clean and healthy as though they had been fed on Brittany butter. France is dwindling away, *mon Lieutenant*. More deaths than births. Soon we'll be in the soup—when all these boy babies are old enough to fight us."

"That's why we're here," said Lieutenant Delavigne. "To keep them weak. To prevent them from arming again."

"Bah!" said the sergeant. "We can do that for five years, ten years, twenty years. After that the War of Revenge, *mon Lieutenant*—and France without allies. A charming prospect for all of us!"

He was a queer fellow, this sergeant, with leanings towards Socialism, and a cynical contempt for French generals, presidents and politicians, but a first-class soldier, and as brave as D'Artagnan of the *Three Musketeers*. He was a realist and stared facts in the face, and spat on them, as it were, in his argumentative moods, especially when they were disguised by the false optimism of the French Press. Every day in the signal-box he read *Le Matin*, two days old, with a kind of savage contempt.

"All goes well in the Ruhr. German resistance is weakening. The railway service is assured. The coal deliveries are excellent. . . . Bah! If I had that journalist here I would wring his neck! He writes that from a café in the Boulevard des Italiens with a glass of vermouth at his elbow!"

The young lieutenant rose from the cane chair which he had brought to this signal-box from a cottage down the line—it belonged to the family of a German railwayman who had been shot for *sabotage*—and stared out of the window upon which he drummed with his finger-nails.

That fellow Michel was not far wrong. That optimistic stuff in the French newspapers was eyewash for the people in Paris. These Germans in the Ruhr were a stubborn crowd and their passive resistance was not beaten yet. France was not getting the goods. The French *Régie* in the Ruhr was not even running the trains—not more than four out of the thirty that used to run each day over these rails. French occupation did not look like good business as regards the payment of French debts, or that “recovery of Europe” about which there had been so much talk after the Treaty of Versailles. It was like putting a monkey wrench into the machinery of German life—here in the Ruhr. It had just stopped.

Lieutenant Delavigne wondered how it was all going to end—for France as well as Germany.

Sergeant Michel seemed to answer his thoughts.

“We’re on the edge of a volcano, *mon Lieutenant*. It all looks very quiet over there in Essen, *n’est-ce-pas?* Yes, but wait a bit. We shall see some pretty bonfires before we get back to the Place de la Concorde. The flames of hell, *mon Lieutenant!*”

He asked a question, abruptly, with a *petit caporal* cigarette lolling from his thin lips.

“Do you know what’s being manufactured—wholesale—by German miners who don’t pick coal?”

“What’s that?” asked the lieutenant.

The sergeant struck a match and held it close to his nose.

“Hate,” he said. “Hotter than this flame. Hatred against France. When I walk through Essen I can feel the fire of it scorching me from the eyes of German girls whom I’d like to kiss now and then, because they’re women and I’m a man, and human nature is human nature, *mon Lieutenant*. I can feel it flaring up in the heads of these square-skulled swine standing like dumb beasts at street corners, and watching me with slant eyes as I pass in the uniform of France. They look tame enough, eh? Well, they’re getting hungry. No meat. Not enough potatoes. No fats for their stomachs. Precious little milk for their babies. Nothing but rage gnawing at their guts because of French fines, orders, im-

prisonings, expulsions, requisitions. Hunger makes beasts of men—wild, tearing beasts. I know, because I've been hungry, *mon Lieutenant!* One day they'll break out, to find a way of escape. They'll start killing each other—the profiteers, the shopkeepers, the big industrial folk. Then there'll be hell round here, and it won't be a joke altogether for French soldiers in lonely machine-gun posts, or French sentinels at street corners. No joke at all, *mon Lieutenant!*"

The young lieutenant looked at his sergeant with raised eyebrows. There was fear in the man's voice, and Sergeant Michel was a brave man who had won the *Croix de Guerre* at Verdun.

"You're getting morbid, *mon vieux*," he said, with a nervous laugh. "It's the absence of Marthe, and this loneliness."

"No," said Sergeant Michel sullenly. "It is because I have a little pity for these German swine. I'm a democrat, *mon Lieutenant*; I believe in the common people of the world. Their right to live and get the fruit of their labours for their women and babes. Name of a dog! Even Germans have a right to live. If we deny them that we're asking for trouble. People will rather die fighting than die starving. I'm of that opinion."

"Your opinion is dangerous, *mon vieux*," said the young lieutenant coldly. "Opinions of that kind are reserved for politicians in Paris, and not for sergeants of machine-gun sections in the Army of the Ruhr."

He spoke severely, as a matter of discipline, but secretly he agreed a little with his argumentative sergeant. After six months in the Ruhr he was beginning to see the danger of it. It would do no good to France, perhaps, if Germany broke up in anarchy.

"Politicians in Paris!" said Sergeant Michel, with a fine expression of disgust. "That dirty breed! While they're arranging the ruin of the world, you and I, *mon Lieutenant*, languish in this signal-box without women, without love, without any joy of life. Now if I had the misfortune of being President of the French Republic——"

Lieutenant Delavigne never had the advantage of knowing

what his sergeant, Henri Michel, of Montmartre, would have done to save the world if he had been President of the French Republic. The man's words were interrupted by the appearance of Colonel Dubois, commanding the 150th Section of *Mitrailleuses*, accompanied by a general whom the young lieutenant recognised with awe.

Both Lieutenant Delavigne and his sergeant sprang to their feet at the unexpected and terrifying visit of these exalted officers.

It was Colonel Dubois who spoke first, with a friendly nod to the young lieutenant.

"This is the young man, general. He speaks German perfectly, and you can see for yourself that he is a handsome fellow. I can vouch for his intelligence."

Lieutenant Delavigne blushed deeply at these amazing compliments, but remained silent with his hand at the salute.

The general, an elderly man with a tanned face, much wrinkled, and a little white moustache, gazed searchingly at the young lieutenant with a friendly and amused smile under his shaggy eyebrows. Then he nodded in a fatherly way to Sergeant Michel, and said: "You can leave us, my friend. We wish to have a little private talk with your lieutenant."

Sergeant Michel saluted rigidly, made a right about turn, and went down the steps of the signal-box.

The old general sat down in the cane chair and lit a cigarette.

"How goes it in this guard post?" he asked pleasantly.

"Very well, *mon Général*."

"But rather boring, eh?"

"Excessively, *mon Général*. Nevertheless——"

"Quite so. You know your duty. Boredom is part of it, for all of us. All the same, you would prefer a less isolated post, a little human society? Perhaps even the company of a pretty woman?"

Lieutenant Delavigne was utterly abashed by these questions. He wondered if it were the general who had gone mad or himself. A little human society! The company of

a pretty woman! What had that got to do with military discipline, or a machine-gun section? He stammered an answer.

"It is a trifle lonely at times, *mon Général*."

The old man's eyes were fixed on him with a twinkling amusement.

"You will be interested to hear that you have won a beauty prize, *mon Lieutenant*. I made inquiries as to the best-looking officer in the Army of the Ruhr—the most *débonair*, the most irresistible to any woman of taste. Your name was reported to me among others, by Colonel Dubois. I am happy to tell you that I agree with those reports."

Colonel Dubois and the general laughed together heartily, while the young lieutenant blushed more deeply and looked ready to die with embarrassment.

"Doubtless it is a joke, *mon Général*," he said faintly.

The old general finished his laughter and puffed at the cigarette which he had put into an amber mouthpiece.

"Not altogether a joke," he said, more seriously. "I have need of a good-looking young officer, but also one who speaks the abominable German language—in itself an heroic achievement for any Frenchman—and one who has intelligence, discretion, and a cool head. Colonel Dubois tells me you have those qualities. Do you agree with him?"

Lieutenant Delavigne agreed with his Colonel perfectly. But modesty forbade an open avowal.

"I speak German, *mon Général*, and my intelligence is, perhaps, slightly superior to that of the average imbecile."

The general seemed satisfied with this self-judgment.

"Good! I have already tried one or two average imbeciles on this mission, and they have failed miserably. It is for you to succeed."

"What is the mission, *mon Général*?"

The old general outlined the mission in a dry, official way, as though giving orders for a military operation, and before the end of it Lieutenant Delavigne was very pale.

"You will proceed to take up your billet in the house of the Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach—what a break-jaw name! As you know, she is the daughter of Herr Heinrich

von Kreutzenach, who is undergoing a sentence of ten years' imprisonment for inciting his factory hands to resist French orders. As you may not know, this young lady is one of the most dangerous enemies we have in the Ruhr, owing to her influence with the working people, and her intimate association with the Monarchists in Berlin and Bavaria. She is the coadjutor and confederate of the notorious Captain Freiheit, who has just escaped from prison and is organising a Royalist rising in East Prussia which may spread to other parts of Germany and increase our trouble in the Ruhr. That is for your information. Now for your orders. You will endeavour to win the confidence of that young woman. I may tell you, from personal observation, that she is extremely attractive as a sample of German womanhood, and, speaking without prejudice, *mon Lieutenant*, it is my opinion that beauty is without frontiers. You will persuade her that you have pro-German sympathies, owing to your Alsatian origin. Colonel Dubois tells me that your people are of Alsace, though you yourself were born and bred in Paris. Very well. You will turn that to advantage. You will obtain some information from the young lady about the Monarchist plans. You will discover the whereabouts of Captain Freiheit and the inner workings of his organisation. You will learn the identity of all visitors to the lady's house, you will keep your ears open to their conversation, and you will report all your information direct to me at Headquarters."

Lieutenant Delavigne's gallor increased towards the end of this monologue.

He stammered but a few startled words.

"An affair of espionage, *mon General*!"

"Exactly," said the general dryly. "For the sake of France, which is playing for big stakes. I wish you good luck, *mon Lieutenant*. Needless to say, if you succeed——"

Colonel Dubois patted the young lieutenant on the shoulder.

"A great chance, my friend! Better than this signal-box, eh? And amusing work. The winner of the beauty prize!"

He laughed heartily again with the general.

The old general gave the lieutenant a slip of paper. On it was written the address of the Fräulein von Kreuzenach. Arrangements had already been made for Lieutenant Delavigne to change places with Lieutenant Murger, who had failed so ignominiously. He could sleep there that evening, and explain his position as a liaison officer with the British command in Cologne. He could take the sergeant as his body-servant.

The general touched his képi and left the signal-box with Colonel Dubois.

Lieutenant Delavigne, alone again in the signal-box, stood motionless, staring through the narrow doorway above the wooden steps.

"Name of a dog!" he said presently. He did not like his job.

Before a week had passed, indeed, within twenty-four hours, Lieutenant Delavigne, of the French Army in the Ruhr, had decided that he preferred his old guard-post in the signal-box to the palace of Heinrich von Kreuzenach. It was less idiotic and humiliating.

As far as creature comforts went, there was, of course, no comparison. He found that he had been allotted—by orders of the French Army of Occupation—a magnificent suite of rooms in the great square house opposite the gates of the Kreuzenach factories where once a hundred thousand men had made the heavy guns for the German Army, and then, after the Armistice, typewriters, ploughs, railway engines, safety razors, and every imaginable article that could be fashioned out of steel to invade the markets of the world, until "passive resistance" had put an end to their labours.

It was ridiculous, thought Lieutenant Delavigne, to have a bedroom large enough for a ballroom, and a drawing-room containing a grand piano which he could not play, to say nothing of the great gilt-framed mirrors which reflected his beauty from all angles—he was certainly, he agreed, a good-looking fellow—and innumerable gilt-backed chairs with embroidered silk, large pieces of Dresden china on ebony

pedestals, wonderful clocks which chimed the hours, and portraits in oils of Heinrich von Kreuzenach and his blonde wife, and his whiskered father and his bearded grandfather, and other ancient specimens of the family which had made a fortune out of armaments and steel.

It was still more ridiculous for Sergeant Michel, late of Montmartre, to occupy two rooms hardly less ornate, and to sleep in a bed of rosewood and pink silk which would have been more suitable for some German Gretchen with yellow plaits and a silk night-dress tied up with blue bows.

Sergeant Michel himself saw the humour of the situation.

"That little devil Marthe," he said, "will call me a sacred liar when I tell her that I snored under a pink coverlet in a German palace. As for Suzanne, she'd look as pretty as a picture in this room with her hair down her back."

"The family," said Lieutenant Delavigne, "doesn't seem very sociable. And we're not popular, *mon vieux*, in this German household."

"Wait a bit, *mon Lieutenant*," said Sergeant Michel. "If I don't get a smile before the week's out from that straw-coloured chambermaid downstairs, I'll never wink at another girl along the Place Pigalle. Though I'll admit she glared at me to-day as though I were a bit of evil-smelling dirt."

"The Fräulein Anna looks very haughty," said the young lieutenant.

He did not add, what was in his own mind, that she also looked extremely beautiful. So beautiful that to a young Frenchman who had been boxed up in a lonely signal-station for six months, staring at coal heaps and derelict wagons, she was, in spite of her German blood, like the vision of Beatrice to Dante in exile.

He had come face to face with her in the big marble-pillared hall downstairs, when Sergeant Michel was carrying his luggage from the taxicab outside. She was a tall girl, of perhaps twenty-two or three, with a mass of spun-gold hair neatly coiled in tiny plaits, and blue eyes—as blue as the cornflowers in Provence—and a rather thin face with a straight little nose, and a proud, sensitive mouth. He

thought that mouth of hers the prettiest thing he had seen, in Germany since the occupation of the Ruhr.

She spoke to him simply in French in answer to his salute, into which he put a touch of gallantry and deference.

"I am the Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach. Now that my father is in prison—unjustly condemned, monsieur!—I am responsible for the household management and all arrangements here. When you have any complaints about my servants, or your comforts, please address them to me."

"I shall have no complaints, Fräulein," said Lieutenant Delavigne, with the greatest respect and in very good German.

Fräulein Anna looked surprised, and smiled faintly before she answered in her own language.

"You speak German, sir? . . . The last French officer who was billeted here had many complaints. About the lack of food—which your troops are preventing from coming into the Ruhr, so that our poor working folk are hungry—about the incivility of my servants, who, I admit, have no ardent desire to serve uninvited guests from the French army."

"He was a fool!" said Lieutenant Delavigne. "Utterly unreasonable! I regret exceedingly that my presence in this house may cause you some slight inconvenience. The situation in the Ruhr is as painful to French officers—to many of us—as it may be to the German population."

"And it *is* painful," said Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach. That proud mouth of hers quivered. "And intolerable," she added. "Intolerable and outrageous."

Lieutenant Delavigne bowed gravely.

"We soldiers have, of course, no control over the political situation. We obey orders, however regrettable. As it happens, I am an Alsatian. I am not altogether in favour of this French action in the Ruhr."

He was speaking according to the part laid down for him by military command. His orders were to ingratiate himself with this lady, to pretend to pro-German sympathy, to establish "confidence." That thought, the remembrance of his

mission, came upon him with a kind of shame, and a deep blush crept up to his forehead. It was not quite a clean game, this, though it was done for France.

Fräulein Anna gave him a quick, searching, candid glance, and then lowered her eyes.

"One day," she said, "France will regret the things she is now doing. They are not worthy of her spirit of ideals. And they are very dangerous—to France."

She seemed inclined to go on speaking. It was as though the sympathy expressed in Lieutenant Delavigne's voice and words—his chivalry, as it seemed—had loosed some pent-up emotion of pride and indignation. Then some thought seemed to startle her and check her. The line of that mouth which the lieutenant liked so much hardened.

"I must go about my work," she said, and with a slight stiff bow and her head raised, passed young Delavigne and went into a room between two marble pillars.

Three days went by without his getting another glimpse of her. On the fourth day he met her at the top of the stairs leading to the bedrooms, but in answer to his quick deferential salute and his obvious desire for a little conversation, she only bowed again, with a touch of colour creeping into her face, and did not even glance at him as she passed by.

Sergeant Michel was able to gather a little information because he made frequent excursions to the servants' quarters on pretence of cleaning the lieutenant's boots, borrowing a brush for his clothes, inquiring about the shops in Essen where he might buy razor blades and various unnecessary things. One of the menservants spoke fairly good French, having been billeted behind the German lines in France during the war, and was not altogether unfriendly. He seemed inclined to practise up his French again, and became distinctly less hostile when Michel told him, with a certain amount of sincerity, that he considered the French occupation of the Ruhr "bad business" for France, and averred his belief in the brotherhood of the working classes across all frontiers, for the sake of world peace and the happiness of common folk.

"And that's a fact," said Sergeant Michel to Lieutenant

Delavigne, "though I would willingly cut that fellow's throat for his hatred of France."

From this servant, Hans Zimmerman, the sergeant had picked up a few little items of knowledge which might be useful. Fräulein Anna's sitting-room, for instance, was on the right of the big hall downstairs between the two pillars. She locked the door every time she left it, and kept the key at her girdle. In this room she received every morning the managers of her father's factory, officials in charge of the public soup kitchens and relief works, and other visitors. According to the man Zimmerman she paid over money from her father's private fortune to maintain the passive resistance of his factory hands. She had been adored by the people of Essen because of her charity and good works long before the time of the French occupation. Her father had been hated then, although now his imprisonment had softened people's hearts towards him.

One queer thing in the family history was about her brother Siegfried. The French-speaking servant had let that out. This Siegfried was a young fellow of sixteen or so, who hated his father like poison, and was up to his neck with all the Communists in Essen who wanted to smash the great industrialists, take possession of the city and all its works, raise the red flag and refuse to pay a single mark either in reparations to France or in taxes to the German Government.

"Monsieur Siegfried, in fact, seems to be a child after my own heart," said Sergeant Michel, who was proud of his revolutionary sentiments, although in reality a most law-abiding citizen and loyal soldier of France.

As it happened, by a curious chance, it was through this boy Siegfried that Lieutenant Delavigne was able to establish more friendly relations with the Fräulein Anna, and to study her personality, which became to him a perplexing and engrossing study—not altogether good for his peace of mind.

It was the seventh day of his ridiculous "mission." He was returning with Sergeant Michel from luncheon in a French mess—where his brother officers were very curious

as to his mysterious departure from the machine-gun section—when at the corner of Essenerstrasse he saw a crowd of German miners gathered round a good-looking young man standing on a coal wagon with broken shafts. He was obviously making a political speech, in flagrant violation of French orders which prohibited all political demonstrations and the assembly of street crowds.

"If you'll take my tip, *mon Lieutenant*," said Sergeant Michel, "we had better get down a side street and turn blind eyes to those ugly-looking swine. Otherwise they may want to eat us for dinner, and I can't see any of our comrades in the neighbourhood."

"This is interesting," said Lieutenant Delavigne. "That is young Siegfried von Kreuzenach, if I am not mistaken. I have a portrait of him in my bedroom. He is uncommonly like the *Fräulein Anna*."

He stood on the edge of the crowd, whose sullen eyes stared fixedly at the young orator so that they took no notice of the French lieutenant and his sergeant.

That boy there on the coal wagon was a picturesque figure, a fair edition, thought the French lieutenant, of that young Camille Desmoulins who—more than a hundred years ago—in the gardens of the Palais Royale in Paris had stood on a tavern chair and called the mob to destroy the Bastille, as a symbol of tyranny. This tall German boy, with straw-coloured hair and blue eyes, and a rather girlish face, was beside himself with passion, and his voice rang out above the heads of the mob around him.

"My comrades, how long are you going to submit to this slow starvation and surrender of all your pride and dignity as men? Have the German people become slaves? Are you going to lick your chains? Are you going to remain the victims of a cowardly and corrupt Government—bought by war profiteers and swinish gamblers who make fortunes out of the falling mark, while your women wither for lack of food and your children die for lack of milk?"

There was a growl from the mob, low and ominous:

"Nein! Nein! Gott verhüte!"

"We are beset with enemies," cried the boy. "The

French Army of Occupation has us at their mercy. They plant machine-guns in our streets, expel our working men, with their wives and families, rob the population of its wages, and blockade the Ruhr to starve us into submission!"

There was a groan from the crowd, and cries of "*Gott strafe Frankreich!*"

The boy laughed with a kind of wild scorn.

"Your greatest enemy is not the French Army. They would be powerless against the uprising of the German people. Your worst enemy is that Government in Berlin which is gambling with the lives of its people as they gambled and lost in the Great War. They have brought Germany to ruin by their financial frauds—that paper money which will not buy food for your stomachs nor clothes for your bodies. They have exploited their people for the interests of big business. They have made you the victims of their economic warfare with the great powers. Gun fodder in war! Slave labourers in peace!"

Again there was a sullen roar from the mob. "*Ja! Ja! Wir sind Esclaven!*"

The boy tossed his hands above his head in a mad, delirious way.

"Away with them! Rise in defence of your life-blood and your women. Declare a commonwealth of workers. Seize the factories, the banks, the mines, and take possession of the wealth which your own industry creates. There is not a French soldier in the Ruhr who will dare to resist your right to democratic liberty. Their claims are not against you, but against the masters of your souls, the war lords, the profiteers, the industrial magnates, the gamblers of world finance, who use you as machines to make their wealth and refuse to pay their taxes and their debts. Be men, German workers of the Ruhr! Be free men!"

A storm of passion rose in the crowd suddenly as though a wind had swept them. It was clear that this boy's words had lit a flame in their hearts, but whether of rage and fury with him or against him it was hard for any outsider to see or understand. Certainly some were against him—one group which seemed to be dominated by an immense fel-

low with neck and shoulders like a bull, and a head with close-cropped hair. It was this man's voice which bawled loudest.

"A traitor! A traitor to the Fatherland! A dirty Communist! *Schweinhund!* Tear his heart out and give it to the dogs."

This big fellow made a rush at the cart where the boy stood. The group about him was fighting fiercely with the other, and larger, part of the crowd. These miners used their fists like sledge-hammers. The noise of their thudding blows against each other was louder than the shouting. Heads were being cracked and faces bashed.

Lieutenant Delavigne blew his whistle. It was answered from a side street, and a patrol of French infantry appeared, with a young lieutenant running ahead. From the surging crowd the big man with the bull neck forced his way with six or seven others, while blows struck them from every side. They were holding something, a limp and bleeding body which they shook brutally as they went.

"Stand back there!" shouted Lieutenant Delavigne.

He drew his revolver and fired over the heads of the foremost men. Startled and sullen they fell back, letting their victim drop on the cobblestones. It was the boy who had stood in the cart, speaking wild, mad words. He lay there senseless, his flaxen-coloured hair dabbled in blood which oozed from a gash on his forehead.

The French patrol had come up, and their officer, very pale and panting, spoke to Lieutenant Delavigne.

"What is it, *mon Lieutenant?* Shall I fire on these swine?"

"It may be unnecessary," said Lieutenant Delavigne.

It was obviously unnecessary. At the sight of the French soldiers the crowd of German miners dwindled away rapidly, sneaking down the side streets or disappearing into doorways.

"It was a slight argument on German economics," said Lieutenant Delavigne to the other young officer. "This child got the worst of it."

He bent down over the boy and searched his breast

pocket. It was stuffed with letters addressed to Siegfried von Kreuzenach.

"I live in this lad's house," he told the officer in charge of the patrol. "Will you detach two of your men to carry him home?"

"With pleasure, *mon Lieutenant*. Doubtless you will make a report?"

"Without doubt."

In the marble hall of the great house of Heinrich von Kreuzenach, the boy, still senseless and bleeding, was laid down by the French soldiers. A maid-servant screamed at the sight of him. Lieutenant Delavigne spoke to her.

"He's not dead. Only slightly hurt, I think. Go and fetch the Fräulein von Kreuzenach, and ask her not to be alarmed."

When the lady came she was certainly alarmed. Her face was very white, and she gave a cry as she stooped over her brother and lifted his head.

"It's nothing," said Lieutenant Delavigne. "A nasty knock on the head and a cut that bleeds a little. If I could have a wet sponge——"

"Bring it. Quickly!" said the Fräulein Anna to the servant maid.

When the sponge was brought, Lieutenant Delavigne knelt down beside the boy and wiped the blood off his face and sprinkled the cold water on his forehead. It revived him at once, and he opened his eyes and groaned.

"You see!" said the lieutenant. "He's better already. No need for a doctor, even."

His eyes met those of the young lady for a moment. In the eyes of the Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach there was gratitude and a little wonder.

"You are very kind," she said, in a low voice.

Presently, when the boy was quite conscious again, Lieutenant Delavigne turned to his sergeant and said: "You and I will carry him to his room, Michel. Go steady!"

"Trust me," said Michel. "I know how one's head aches after a knock-out blow. I once fought with an *apache* in the Rue Blanche——"

"I will show you the way," said the young lady.

She led them upstairs to a room near her own, and they followed, carrying the boy, whose head was limp on the lieutenant's shoulder. He was not heavy, for a lad of his age, but it was awkward turning the corner of the staircase with him, and he groaned again when they jolted him. But he smiled faintly and said: "*Danke schön!*" when they laid him on the bed in his room.

Fräulein Anna kissed her brother on the forehead, and then held his hand. Lieutenant Delavigne saw that she had tears in her eyes, and that her lips trembled.

"My dear brother!" she said. "My dear, rash, unwise, little brother! How do you feel now? Would you like to see a doctor?"

The boy shook his head and murmured something in a sulky way.

Lieutenant Delavigne saluted and left the room with Sergeant Michel, closing the door very quietly behind him.

In their own rooms Michel lit a *petit caporal* and winked at his own image in one of the mirrors.

"Excellent business!" he said. "You and I have played the Good Samaritan, *mon Lieutenant!* We risked our lives for this son of a Boche. It will give us a better standing in this house of the enemy."

"It was not for that I tried to rescue the child," said the lieutenant, with unnecessary heat. "It was a question of humanity."

"I agree," said Sergeant Michel. "I hated to see those swine mauling that white mouse. All the same, it's strange that after serving four years in the trenches and killing Boches like bugs—just as they killed us—you and I, monsieur, should feel a little pity because a young Bochelet is being mauled in a street fight. . . . It is the natural chivalry of the French spirit, no doubt."

"I didn't like the look of that crowd," said Lieutenant Delavigne. "They were angry beasts."

Sergeant Michel laughed.

"They begin to show their teeth. To roar a little, on hungry stomachs, poor devils! . . . Monsieur, you and I stand

without much safety on the edge of a volcano. When it bursts this city of Essen won't be a health resort."

With that prophecy Sergeant Michel sloped away to his own room, to lie on the bed with the pink silk coverlet and read his latest love-letters from Marthe, Suzanne, Yvonne, and other ladies in the Paris slums.

Presently there was a tap at the door, and the lieutenant answered it.

Outside in the passage stood Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach. She spoke in an emotional way, rather breathlessly.

"I thank you a thousand times, monsieur. Pardon me, because I forgot these thanks in a moment of alarm—because of my brother's wounds."

"I have done nothing, mademoiselle, except my duty," said Lieutenant Delavigne.

She hesitated and seemed anxious to explain something which was difficult to say.

"Doubtless you will have to make a report on this affair to your military authorities?"

"That will be necessary, I fear."

"Yes," said the lady. "But perhaps you will be good enough—kind enough—to leave out my brother's name? At least not to let it appear that he was the cause of any riot. If he were imprisoned—or expelled from the Ruhr—I should be most deeply distressed."

She raised her eyes to those of Lieutenant Delavigne with a kind of pleading.

"He is so young, monsieur! Such a boy—and so delicate! He is not accountable for his actions. All these tragic happenings, the hunger and misery of our people, the severity of your army, the ruin of Germany, have broken his heart and made him a little mad, I think. He talks wildly—as youth talks. He is an idealist because of his love for the working people who suffer so much, but he is in revolt against those who wish to save Germany by other means than mob risings and anarchy."

"Even against his own father, is it not?" asked the lieutenant quietly.

She seemed startled by that question, and afraid.

"People have told you that?"

Lieutenant Delavigne nodded, and said: "We hear things."

"It is true, alas!" said Fräulein von Kreuzenach. "He thinks my poor father has not acted in the interests of the people, but merely in defence of his industry and wealth—to escape reparations and defraud the French." A faint smile touched her lips. "It is possible that you agree with him in that!"

"Candour compels me to agree, *gnädiges Fräulein*," said the lieutenant.

She made a little impatient movement with her head.

"All the world thinks so! I only know that my father is an honest man, loyal to what he thinks the interests of his country, ready to die for it, if need be. But my brother Siegfried——"

"He is a Communist, it seems?" asked the lieutenant.

She answered quickly and passionately.

"He is a schoolboy, monsieur! A child who plays with fire, not knowing its danger. A young poet with impossible fantastic dreams of liberty and the rights of the people."

The lieutenant permitted himself another question, which he spoke with a touch of irony.

"You do not believe in liberty, mademoiselle?"

"I believe in the old loyalties, monsieur. Loyalty to the Fatherland, loyalty to the spirit of duty and discipline, loyalty, above all, to the only virtues which can save Germany and the world."

"What are those, mademoiselle?"

"Justice," she said, "and charity."

"They are good virtues," the lieutenant agreed, "but differently interpreted, *gnädiges Fräulein*. French justice seems injustice to Germany. German justice seems fraudulent to France."

"But charity?" she asked. "Charity and fair play? Is there no compassion in the world for hungry men, despairing men, and the cry of the women and children?"

With an impetuous gesture she put her hand on the lieutenant's sleeve.

"Monsieur, I warn you that if France interprets justice

so harshly and has no thought of charity, there will be an outbreak of blood and fire in Germany which will set Europe alight and be unquenchable in the tears of the world."

She spoke with an intense conviction as though she saw the terror of which she spoke.

"I know my people," she said, after a moment's silence. "I know what is in their minds and hearts—their despair, their anger, their hatred, their anguish. I know those who are inciting them to action, one way or the other, with faith in violence, mob-rule, or monarchist risings. I am in touch with both sides, and I know that if we do not get relief by world-justice—quickly, quickly!—there will be an anarchy here in Germany that will shock humanity itself."

"Those are grave words, mademoiselle," said Lieutenant Delavigne.

He spoke gravely. This young man who thought himself so beautiful, who craved in his heart for the amorous pleasantries of life, who had come into this house with orders to captivate this lady by his gallantry, forgot that side of his nature, and his own vanity, in this vision of the conflict that might come out of these teeming cities of the Ruhr. This lady spoke of what she knew.

"Those are grave words," he said again.

"They are dangerous words," she answered. "Why do I say them to you? First, because you are kind, monsieur! And, secondly, because you are here as a spy upon me, to report my words, movements, actions, to your headquarters. Well, then, report my warning, if you like! It is good for France to know. Only, if you are chivalrous, you will not make a victim of my little brother."

Lieutenant Delavigne was stricken speechless for a moment. Those words accusing him as a spy made him hot and cold by turns.

"I trust you have made that accusation lightly," he said. "A spy! Surely, mademoiselle, you do not wish to insult me, after what you are pleased to call my kindness?"

The insincerity of his words shamed him as he spoke them. He felt a queer sense of sickness in his stomach.

She smiled at him.

"Forgive me," she said. "Spy is too strong a word in time of peace. Let us say—observer. After all, it is your duty to France."

He stammered something about the honour of a French soldier, and she nodded and held out her hand.

"For what you did for Siegfried, grateful thanks, *mon Lieutenant*. If you would sit with him a little it would be a further kindness. He will be lonely, poor boy."

She slipped away from him down the marble staircase.

Lieutenant Delavigne wrote out a report, three days later, on information obtained in the household of Heinrich von Kreuzenach. It was not sensational, perhaps, but it revealed a serious state of things in the city of Essen, and, generally, in the Ruhr. It would perhaps only confirm the knowledge already in the hands of the French authorities, yet perhaps even that might be of value as additional links of evidence in the proof that the population of the Ruhr was boiling up for an explosion of human passions, which would certainly affect the interests and authority of France.

It was extraordinary—and consoling—to Lieutenant Delavigne that he had not been obliged to play the spy to obtain the facts in the report. There had been no need of melodrama—listening at doors, stealing private papers, searching for secret drawers, and all that stage business of the spy in action which he had imagined would be necessary.

On the contrary, he had obtained much that he wanted to know, much that was worth knowing, from the very people who should have been most hostile to him—young Siegfried von Kreuzenach and the Fräulein Anna herself.

At first he had been embarrassed and disconcerted by the candour of the boy. It had seemed rather mean and contemptible to a man of sensitive honour to sit by the bedside of a sick boy—for he had been grievously bruised in that street brawl—playing the sympathetic friend and listening to all kinds of revelations which would be used in a secret report to the French Army of Occupation. The boy seemed utterly careless, deliberately reckless of all his blabbing. He made no secret at all of the Communist agitation and organi-

sation at work in the Ruhr. Rather he gloried in its growing strength and imminent action.

"France thinks she can tame us by hunger," he said, with an ironical laugh. "What an absurdity! The workers were tame enough when there was food enough—as tame as fat sheep—but hunger is making them fierce at last—*Gott sei dank!*—and soon you will see a revolution in Germany which will sweep the country like a flame. I pray for it! It is our only chance of liberty. French oppression will overreach itself. It is playing into the hands of every honest German who wishes the liberation of his Fatherland from foreign enemies and the scoundrels who have betrayed it from within."

He gave the names of the leaders who were inciting the workers to revolt against their own Government. Lieutenant Delavigne memorised them, and afterwards wrote them down, almost sorry that the boy had blabbed so much. They were of all classes—professors, artists, foremen of mines, railwaymen. The leading spirit of all seemed to be a schoolmaster named Schultz, who, according to this boy, was a man of genius, a great orator, and a born organiser. Always he went about among the workers in Essen, Düsseldorf, Oberkirchen, Bochum, inflaming their passion, preaching the gospel of liberty, enrolling them in his "Storm Troops of Free Workers." There was another man—a Russian from Moscow—who formed with Schultz and a miner named Feuerbach a Committee of Three, controlling the revolutionary movement and its plan of campaign.

"We have a million men ready to rise when the signal is given," said young Von Kreuzenach. "And our first action will be to depose the civil authorities and the industrial magnates."

"Including your honoured father?" asked Lieutenant Delavigne, gazing at this boy with surprise and incredulity. Siegfried von Kreuzenach laughed.

"My honoured father is safe in prison. So much the better for him! And so much the better for Germany, who would only be brought to ruin by his Monarchist plots and old-fashioned schemes of reaction by which the workers

would be more surely enslaved. Even now those Monarchists are getting ready for another ridiculous 'Putsch.' This time they'll be taught a lesson!" So the boy prattled on, wildly, with amazing revelations.

Lieutenant Delavigne warned him once against his own interests.

"You tell me too much, young man," he said. "After all, I am a lieutenant in the French army."

The boy laughed.

"Do you think I care? Do you think I don't know that every word I say will be reported to your headquarters? That is why I'm telling you. It will do France good to know that her tyranny is to be challenged by the uprising of the German folk, seizing their own destiny. What can your Army of Occupation do with sixty million people in revolt? Nothing but get out of the way of its fire and hell!"

"Fire and hell won't help Germany," said Lieutenant Delavigne.

"Yes!" said the boy, with a passion in his eyes. "Out of that fire the spirit of the German people will rise free and strong."

This boy's fanaticism, his wildness, his childish indiscretion, seemed to the French lieutenant pitiable, as he lay there in bed with his blonde hair on the pillow, and his girlish look. But what was more astounding was the conduct of the Fräulein Anna. She came sometimes and sat by the bedside of her young brother, although he was silent and sulky in her presence, and spoke ironical things about her Monarchist sympathy and her spirit of reaction.

"You are a woman," he said once, "and like all women, afraid of a little violence, and incurably sentimental. Germany won't be saved by sentiment."

"It is because I want Germany to be saved," she answered, "that I abhor all these plans of violence—on both sides. It will lead to worse ruin, and rivers of blood."

"A little blood-letting will do no harm," said the boy.

She looked at him in a despairing way.

"Siegfried! You child! You poor ignorant child! You

are too young even to remember the horror of the War. Tell him, *mon Lieutenant!* Tell him of the agony of the trenches and the foul truth of war."

It was strange that she seemed to have no enmity to this French lieutenant, though she called him a spy, and believed that the actions of the French army in the Ruhr were "intolerable and outrageous." She spoke to him rather as a man of sense who could rise above the passion and prejudice of national sentiment, and see the pity and danger of this state of things in Europe.

"It does not lead to peace," she said more than once. "It does not help humanity."

In spite of himself, and because of that appeal to something higher than national pride, Lieutenant Delavigne responded to her attitude of mind. Perhaps, after all, there was more at stake in this business than French claims for reparations and French justice. Perhaps Europe was at stake, and the safety of civilisation. Perhaps this French adventure in the Ruhr, legal and just as he thought it, might lead to a spreading anarchy which would involve France herself and many nations, as this girl seemed to think. It was impossible to play the gallant with her. It was ridiculous to twist his little black moustache and think of his manly beauty in the presence of this German girl, whose eyes were straight and disconcerting in their candour and whose speech dealt with the gravities and sufferings of peoples in conflict.

One evening she spoke to him outside the door of her room.

"I am afraid," she said.

"Impossible to believe!" he answered lightly. "You are so fearless, *gnädiges Fräulein.*"

She said again, "I am afraid," and he saw that her face was white even to the lips.

She glanced round the great marble hall, with its ugly black pillars on the ground floor where they stood, and then, as though satisfied that no one could hear them, spoke in a low voice.

"You are an enemy of my country, and yet kind and

understanding, I think. It is because I think so that I am going to tell you something which seems like treachery to my Fatherland; which, indeed, is treachery to one of its best and bravest men."

He was astounded and utterly bewildered.

"Tell me," he said.

She beckoned him, and led him through a door between the pillars, and stood there in this room furnished plainly as an office, with her hands on her bosom. She was greatly agitated and distressed.

"There is a man," she said, "who is coming to this house to-night. He is my lover. He is the man whom I love best in the world."

Lieutenant Delavigne bowed stiffly. Instinctively he disliked the lover of this German girl, as he disliked the lovers of all pretty women. That was his French temperament, and his vanity of youth.

"He has not come to Essen for love of me," she said. "He has another passion, greater even than love."

"Is there such a passion, mademoiselle?" asked Lieutenant Delavigne gallantly.

She looked at him gravely.

"As a French officer, you know it," she answered. "For you it is *la Patrie*—for a German, the Fatherland. Even love is nothing to the passion of patriotism, for which men and women will risk everything and die gladly. Is it not so?"

"When one's country is in danger," said the French lieutenant.

"Germany is in danger," said the Fräulein von Kreuzenach. "It is on the edge of ruin. This lover of mine thinks he can save it. . . . He is Captain Freiheit."

At the mention of that name Lieutenant Delavigne was startled. Every one in Europe knew that name, as that of the leader of the Monarchist rising which had endeavoured to overthrow the Republic, and had caused a week of civil war and bloody folly in the outskirts of Berlin. That was two years ago, when there was still enthusiasm for the Republic. Freiheit's Royalists had been wiped out, and some

of his brother officers had been stamped to death by the mob when they were taken prisoners. Freiheit himself had been condemned to ten years' imprisonment, but had recently escaped, through the connivance of his guards. He had appeared in Bavaria. It was known that he was in close touch with Ludendorff and the old officers of the German General Staff. He had been a visitor to the Crown Prince in exile. He was the most active agent of the Monarchist plots in Germany, and time had worked in his favour. The French occupation of the Ruhr, the pitiful weakness of the German Government, and the financial collapse of Germany under a monstrous inflation of its paper money, had killed the Republican spirit in Germany, except among the extremists of the Left, who proclaimed the Red gospel of Bolshevism as the only alternative to Monarchist reaction. Captain Freiheit was the hero of middle-class Germany, and of all the Nationalists who looked to the traditions of the old régime as the one hope for escape from anarchy on the one hand and from France on the other.

"He is coming here to-night?" said the French lieutenant. "To this house in Essen?"

He stammered out the words incredulously. Surely that visit would be known at French Headquarters? The fellow would be caught like a rat in a trap.

"He has been here for a week—in the city," said the girl. "Needless to say, he is in disguise and working under another name. You see, I am betraying him to you."

Lieutenant Delavigne stared at the girl. She was very white, even to the lips.

"Yes," he said, "as a French officer it will be my duty——" He broke off his somewhat pompous sentence, and asked a startled question in a human, boyish way. "Why do you betray your lover, *gnädiges Fräulein*? Even German women——"

She laughed bitterly at those last words.

"Even German women ought to be loyal to their love? Yes! I think they are as true as French women, *monsieur*." She made a gesture of impatience. "Let us talk without nonsense! I will tell you plainly why I betray my lover.

It is because I wish to save many good lives, and to stop a conflict which will lead to agony and blood."

She raised her hands with a little moan.

"Have we not had enough blood and agony? Can there never be peace for women and children?"

She seemed to forget the presence of the French lieutenant, and spoke in a low voice, so that he could hardly hear her words.

"I think of the women and children, and the poor, simple men who are being rallied to one side or the other. Communism! That madness! And Monarchy, with its call for revenge and its defiance of France! What hope is there in such desperate acts? What possible result except a murderous struggle, and utter ruin, and misery beyond words? Surely if I can stop it—or hinder it—I am serving the spirit of peace, without disloyalty?"

She moved to a tall writing-desk, a heavy, old-fashioned thing with many drawers and, stooping a little, pulled out some papers fastened together with a piece of blue tape.

"Sir," she said to the French lieutenant, "here is the plan of Captain Freiheit and his friends for an armed rising in the Ruhr. You will see that it is a desperate scheme, and highly organised. The Communist minority will be powerless against such a well-armed force, although they will fight like wolves at bay, if my brother Siegfried is right. Captain Freiheit will be here at eight o'clock this evening. It may be in the interests of France to arrest him in this house. If I give you these papers which reveal his plans, I only ask one thing in return."

"Yes?" asked Lieutenant Delavigne coldly.

"Your word of honour that my betrayal of Captain Freiheit, my dear lover, will never be revealed."

"My word of honour as a gentleman and a French officer," said Lieutenant Delavigne.

He took the girl's hand, and raised it to his lips.

"It is a betrayal for love's sake," he said, "to save innocent blood, and shut the gates of hell."

He spoke with no sham emotion, but sincerely.

"What can one woman do against the rising tide of pas-

sion?" asked Anna von Kreuzenach, and then she wept a little.

The French lieutenant made his report, and handed in his papers to the old general who had come to the signal-box with Colonel Dubois. That is to say, he handed them to the general's aide-de-camp in the hotel which was French Headquarters in Essen, and said: "This matter is very urgent, *mon Capitaine*, and of great importance."

The young officer smiled faintly in a supercilious way, and kept the papers waiting in his desk for quite a time before he condescended to take them to the general.

Lieutenant Delavigne smoked several cigarettes, looked at the last number of *L'Illustration*, and read the advertisements of face creams and hair tonics in an absent-minded way for half an hour afterwards. All his thoughts were concentrated on the amazing betrayal of Captain Freiheit by this girl, Anna von Kreuzenach, who loved him. For him, Armand Delavigne, it was of course amazing luck! He knew that. Fate had lifted him out of his obscurity as a lieutenant of a machine-gun section. This knowledge he had brought was of vital importance to France, and to the world. In the papers which the Fräulein Anna had given him were the plans and date of a Monarchist rising which would undoubtedly result in civil war in Germany. If that happened France might whistle for reparations.

It is not surprising that a young lieutenant of the French army should feel himself exalted by the importance of his mission, and flatter himself that his tact and sympathy and good looks had procured this information. But that egotism, natural and inevitable to a young officer, was submerged beneath a wave of admiration and pity for the lady who had sacrificed the loyalty of love for one man to the larger loyalty of love for humanity, for the German people, and for the cause of peace.

"The general will see you," said the supercilious officer, opening the door leading to the inner room.

Lieutenant Delavigne stood inside the doorway, with his hand at the salute.

The general was at his desk, signing some papers, while he held a cigar in his left hand. His gold-embroidered képi lay on a chair at his side, and the buttons of his tunic were undone.

He slashed at his signature, dropped the pen, and looked up at the lieutenant with a glint of amusement under his shaggy eyebrows.

"Come in, *mon Lieutenant*, and shut the door behind you."

Then he rose from his chair and patted the lieutenant on the shoulder.

"*Très bien!* You have brought some useful information. I thought your good looks would establish confidence and get on the right side of a pretty lady! The best lovers are the best spies."

Lieutenant Delavigne blushed deeply. He did not relish the general's jocular remarks, or that mention of spies.

The general put on his gold-rimmed pince-nez, and glanced at the papers.

"We knew a good deal of this," he said. "We had all the threads of the plot in our hands. Barring the date for the rising. That is important, though of course it is liable to change."

He was not astounded or excited by the revelation in those papers. Lieutenant Delavigne was disappointed because the general was so calm and unimpressed.

"As for Captain Freiheit," said the old man, "I see you write in your report that he will visit the *Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach* at eight o'clock this evening. That is an error."

"Pardon me, *mon Général*," said Lieutenant Delavigne, "I have that information beyond all doubt."

The general smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Fate has decided otherwise. Captain Freiheit was killed two hours ago by the Communist leader Schultz. We have arrested the murderer."

"Killed, *mon Général*?"

"Shot through the head in a busy street."

The general stared down at his desk and drummed on his blotting-pad.

"Whether it is good for France—and it is my duty to think only of that—I cannot tell. It saves me from the necessity of arresting the murdered man. On the whole, I am in favour of non-intervention between German Communists and Monarchists. If they like to kill each other in large numbers, so much the better for France. If they plunge Germany into anarchy and disrupt the German *Reich*, again so much the better for France."

He put his hand again on the lieutenant's shoulder.

"You have carried out a difficult task with intelligence and zeal. Your promotion will follow."

"*Merci, mon Général!*"

Lieutenant Delavigne saluted stiffly.

But in that moment of exaltation because of this promise he had a sense of pity for a German lady whose lover lay dead. Her betrayal for a larger cause had been made in vain. Death had arrested Captain Freiheit and put him out of harm's way.

There was a tinkle at the general's telephone, and the old man picked up the receiver and listened.

He answered "Yes, yes," and "No, no," and then snapped out some orders.

"The machine-gun section will be reinforced. Do not open fire unless the mob"—he used the word "*canaille*"—"attacks our guard posts. After that sweep them ruthlessly, without pity."

He laid down the receiver and lit a cigarette.

"The Communists have broken loose already," he said. "Rioting, pillaging, burning. Get back to your machine-gun section, *mon Lieutenant*. The music of the *mitrailleuses* is the best tune for a soldier's ears."

Lieutenant Delavigne did not proceed directly to his old signal station. He returned to the house of Anna von Kreuzenach to fetch his kit and Sergeant Michel. The music of the *mitrailleuses* was very loud in the direction of the Kreuzenach factories, and out of the darkness in that

quarter red flames shot up and the sky throbbed with the glow of fire. The volcano was in eruption—the volcano of a people's passion.

One spark of it touched the body of the French lieutenant. A stray bullet struck him in the side as he walked towards the front door of the big square house opposite the factory gates. He staggered and put his hand to his side and cried out, "*Mon Dieu!*" before falling on the pavement in a twisted way. He tried to rise, but fell back again, and writhed a little because of sharp pain, until he lost all physical sensation and was conscious only of self-pity and great weariness.

It was Sergeant Michel who found him senseless two hours later and carried him indoors with foul curses, and then bent over him with a cry of "*Mon Lieutenant! Mon camarade!*"

In the big hall, with its ugly pillars of black marble, the Fräulein Anna von Kreuzenach, who had lost her lover that day, knelt beside the man who had been a spy in her house, and put her arm under his head and gently raised it when for a few moments he recovered consciousness.

He smiled and spoke faintly.

"On the other side," he said in French, "there is, perhaps, no problem of the Ruhr! No frontiers of hatred, mademoiselle."

They were the last words of a French lieutenant, and rather gallant, I think.

THE END



39353001495512



S0-AHO-116

